

Community Analysis, 2014

Working Draft

City of Gunnison, Colorado



This Community Analysis comprises the first step in the development of the *City of Gunnison comprehensive Plan*. It provides measures and observations pertaining to the existing conditions of the community.

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CITY OF GUNNISON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PHASE 1 - COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND HISTORY

1.1 Introduction

This Community Analysis comprises the first step in the development of the *City of Gunnison Comprehensive Plan*. It provides measures and observations pertaining to the existing conditions of the community. Observations established in this analysis highlight trends and potential externalities that may influence the future of the community. Data sources are varied and many observations are based on interviews with community members with expertise and insight regarding the community.

Numerical figures and statistical trends, while essential to understanding the community trends, do not necessarily tell the community's story. Therefore, this analysis also presents anecdotal and historic community perspectives, because a contextual understanding of the community is seen as being crucial in planning for the future.

Over the next 18 months, the City will begin a community process to write an update of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The first *Master Plan* was completed in 1980. Subsequent updates occurred in 1986, 1997 and 2007. Since 2007, three other significant comprehensive planning documents have been completed: the *West Gunnison Neighborhood Plan*, the *VanTuyl Ranch Management Plan*, and the *City of Gunnison Non-Motorized Transportation Plan*. Many goals and objectives stated in these previous plans have been accomplished, while other aspirations continue through time and have the same relevance today that they did in the past.

Eliciting a Community Vision is an integral element of the upcoming planning process and this draft *Community Analysis* is intended to help facilitate a meaningful dialog for the citizenry as this vision is derived. This plan is composed of eleven sections and the reader may easily review subject matter by the related section headings. Each section concludes with observations that may help tie specific content of the individual sections to the larger community context.

1.2 Brief History of Gunnison

Recorded human habitation in the Gunnison Basin dates back approximately 8,000 to 12,000 years, as indicated by evidence found at the Mountaineer Archeological Site on Tenderfoot Mountain (W Mountain). This Folsom Period site is renowned because it contains one of the oldest buildings found in North America – this discovery, made in 2003, was identified as one of the top 100 scientific findings of the year by [*Discovery Magazine*](#).

The Ute Indians inhabited Colorado before the time of the first Spanish explorations of western Colorado. The Ute Indian culture does not address folklore about migration, believing that “*our people lived here since the beginning of time.*” Chief Ouray is probably the most famous tribal member in American History because of his negotiations with the white people; he traveled to Washington in 1868 to work on a treaty with the Federal government and where he met President Grant.

“We do not want to sell a foot of our land that is the opinion of our people. The whites can go and take the land and come out again. We do not want them to build houses here.” – Chief Ouray.

During the late 1700s, several Spanish expeditions explored the area that is now western Colorado, which included parts of the Gunnison River Basin. As early as 1830, trappers or “mountain men” searched for fur pelts in the Gunnison area.

In 1850 Congress allocated funding for the “Pacific Railroad Survey.” In 1853, Captain John W. Gunnison and his party of U.S. Army surveyors camped near the present site of the city of Gunnison, but detailed survey records were not developed by the Gunnison party. In 1873 Ferdinand Hayden began survey work in the unknown geography of southwestern Colorado; these expeditions focused on geology, botany and triangulating the summits of large mountain peaks in Colorado. These surveys involved some of the first accents recorded on many of the +14,000 peaks in the state.

Many of the mountain valley and peaks were first explored by prospectors. In fact prospectors arrived in the Taylor Park region northeast of Gunnison around 1860, and in 1871, a government cow camp was established near the junction of Tomichi Creek and the Gunnison River.

Sylvester Richardson of Denver arrived with a group of settlers in 1874; and in 1877 the town became the seat of Gunnison County. An influx of miners occurred in 1878-79 and the City of Gunnison was incorporated in 1880. Land speculation during this time period was rampant and a feud ensued that divided the incorporated boundaries into Original Gunnison and West Gunnison, with each jurisdiction vying for the lucrative railroad facilities.

Gunnison was a strategic geographic hub providing access to the east over Marshal Pass, to the south into the heart of the San Juan Mountains, and to the Mining District that included Irwin, Gothic, Floresta, and Tincup in the northern part of the Basin. Local historian Duane Vandenbusche details the strategically significant location of Gunnison (*The Hub of the Wheel*) in his book *History of the Gunnison Country*.

The Colorado silver boom started in 1879 and lasted until early 1893 when silver prices bottomed-out. However, coal mining in Crested Butte and Ohio Creek continued through the early 20th Century when the mines closed. Rail services diminished with mining and by 1953 these services ceased. Coal mining in the North Fork area of the county has been a significant tax driver and has provided mineral impact funds from the state to local jurisdictions, although water issues are causing the mine in Somerset to cease operations.

Ranching operations became prevalent during the early years of Gunnison and continued to be the main-stay of the local community through the present day.

In 1911, the Colorado State Normal School was opened and continues as Western State Colorado University, a community icon and economic driver.

The largest body of water in Colorado, Blue Mesa Reservoir which was formed by completion of the dam in 1965, is also a significant influence upon the community. Blue Mesa is part of the Wayne Aspinall Unit, which creates opportunities for recreation and also generates hydro-electric power.

The Post World War II era brought shifting economic and demographic trends. Tourism and the birth of the ski industry began to significantly influence the local economy and it continues to be a major local employment contributor. Student enrollment at WSCU increased and federal land management agencies expanded the local employment force. Over the decades, Gunnison has transitioned alongside the changes in American culture; however several key elements that

originally attracted settlers to the valley still exist today. While many of the historic mines have closed, ranching, hunting and recreation, federal land management and education remain as critical elements of the local economy today.

SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

2.1 Population

Population change is largely dependent upon changes in the region and local economy which influence the number and type of employment opportunities and their associated earnings and benefits. Gunnison's historic population trends¹ reflect this dependency, and Section 4 (Economics and Fiscal Functions) will address the contemporary economic drivers affecting the community.

Population growth descriptions from the 1880s boom portrayed a transient community with approximately 8,000 city residents and 40,000 total persons residing in the county. However, the hard rock mining bust (late 1880s) was followed by an agrarian economic dominance, and slow population growth trends occurred through the middle of the 20th Century.

Population growth dynamics beginning in the 1960s corresponds to the development of Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) and the growing tourism economy. This spurred modest population growth in the city of Gunnison and more rapid growth in the upper Gunnison Basin and other resort communities on the western slope of Colorado.

Population growth trends on Colorado's western slope between 1990 and 2007 were robust. During this period Summit, Garfield, and Eagle counties along the I-70 corridor saw growth of 15 to 47 percent per decade, due to the growth in the resort industry; this growth trend was greatest during the 1990s. Mesa County, which is influenced by oil and natural resource extraction, grew 12 to 20 percent per decade. During this time, growth rates in Gunnison County averaged about 3.5 percent per year and the city's population growth hovered at about one percent annually.

Growth distribution in Gunnison County during the past 25 years has been significantly skewed, with the largest population increases found in unincorporated portions of the County in the upper East River Valley, while population increases in and around Gunnison were much slower.

POPULATION GROWTH COMPARISON					
YEAR	UPPER EAST RIVER VALLEY	CB / MT CB	3-MILE AREA	CITY OF GUNNISON	COUNTY
1990	506	1,244	3,515	4,636	10,273
2000	1,286	2,251	4,205	5,405	13,956
2010	2,217	2,284	4,527	5,845	15,324
Percent Change in 20 years	77%	46%	22%	21%	33%

Based on State Demographer population growth projections, future population growth rates for Gunnison County are projected to average about 1.2 percent annually for the next 27 years.

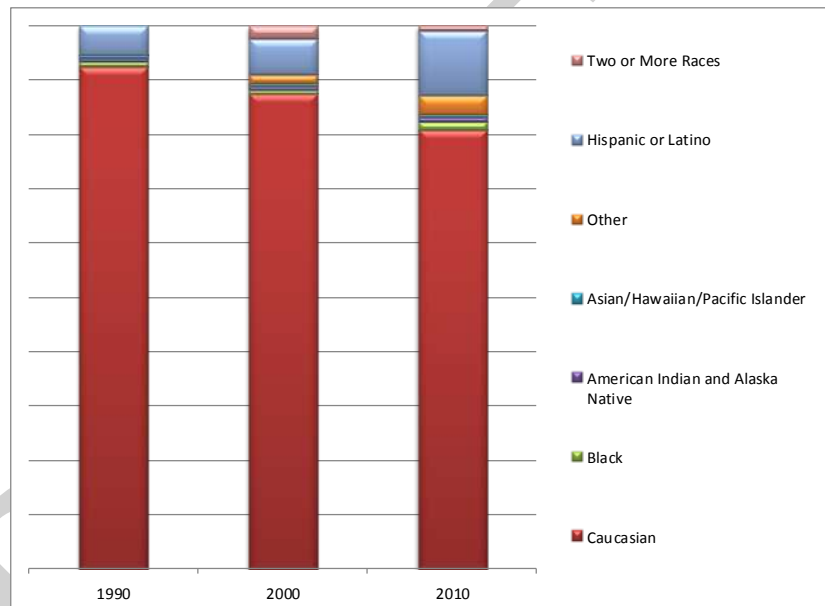
¹ Data related to population; race and ethnicity; gender; age; households; employment; and education are from the US Census for the years indicated.

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH RATES - GUNNISON COUNTY						
July 2010	July 2015	July 2020	July 2025	July 2030	July 2035	July 2040
15,324	15,507	17,987	19,217	20,273	21,222	22,107
PROJECTED PERCENTAGE CHANGE						
	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8

2.2 Race and Ethnicity

The population of the city and county of Gunnison has become more culturally diverse during the past two decades, and between 2000 and 2010. Although the total population has increased, the Caucasian population has remained at about 92 percent while the Hispanic, Black and “Other” sectors have increased. This can be attributed to several factors.

In the 1980s Cora Indians from Jesus Maria in the mountainous Nayarit region of Mexico began immigrating to Colorado to escape the increasing violence in Mexico. When they first came to Colorado the men mostly worked as shepherds in the Uncompahgre National Forest. The Cora people work on ranches, in construction and in hotels. Many who have been in Gunnison for over a decade have found employment in other sectors. The Hispanic people who have immigrated have come to Gunnison in order to make better lives for themselves and their families but many live in sub-standard housing conditions.



Of the 335 foreign-born residents of Gunnison in 2012, 52 were naturalized citizens and all had entered the United States prior to 2010.

One of the challenges the community faces is helping these immigrants integrate into the social fabric of the community. This is partly because of the language barrier, but also because the Cora people tend to be quiet and stick to themselves and the mestizo immigrants do not intermingle with other residents of the valley.

Gunnison attracts residents from other parts of the country as well. Of the 5,522 people living in Gunnison in 2012, 58 percent were born in another state.

2.3 Age of the Population

The City of Gunnison, with a median age of 23, is the youngest incorporated city in the state of Colorado. Obviously this figure is significantly influenced by the student population at Western State Colorado University. Since 1990, 90 percent of the population of the city has been less than age 60.

Most parts of the country are contending with an aging population but Gunnison, largely because of the university's influence, is actually getting younger. In 2000, 17.7 percent of the population was born between 1956 and 1965; in 2010 the number decreased to 6.45 percent. Winter climate is a primary factor for this migration trend; many people who reach retirement age choose to go to warmer climates. Also, there is a constant replenishing of college-age residents that makes Gunnison's demographic profile unusual. This Census demographic may be skewed by the absence of retired residents who wintered in warmer climates during the winter/spring when the 2010 Decennial Census occurred.

2.4 Life Expectancy

According to "The Places in the US Where People Live the Longest,"¹ a March, 2014 report released by the *Business Insider*, Gunnison County has the highest life expectancy for men in the United States (82 years); and the life expectancy for women in Gunnison is the fourth highest in the country (84 years). Life expectancy is based on a variety of factors including gender, race, income, smoking habits, physical activity, hypertension, and obesity. The report is based on health statistics from 1989-2010. This data is based on indirect indicators about health: Gunnison has low levels of inactivity, smoking and obesity; it also has a few wealthy people which drive up the median income. So while the data could be a bit misleading, Gunnison does have a large number of persons who live a healthy lifestyle and a few wealthy people living in the area, both of which contribute to a very healthy population.

2.5 Educational Attainment

The Gunnison community is well-educated, with 89.9 percent of the population being high school graduates or higher and 36.7 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. Because of the relatively young age of the population of Gunnison and the influence of the university, in 2010, 46 percent of the population over age three was enrolled in school.

2.6 Household Composition

The average number of persons per household in Gunnison is 2.20.² Since 1990, Gunnison has had more "non-family" households than "family" households.³ In 1990, 15 percent of the family households had a female head of household. By 2010 female heads of household increased to 23 percent. For non-family households, about 61 percent are comprised of a single person living alone. These household composition trends are a national phenomenon and will be a significant influence the future of many communities including Gunnison. In Gunnison, household composition is also influenced by the university students and young median age of the population.

2.7 Observations - Demographic Trends

- Population change is largely dependent upon changes in the region and local economy, i.e., changes in the number and type of employment opportunities and their associated earnings and benefits.
- The largest population increases in Gunnison County have occurred in the unincorporated portions of the County in the upper East River Valley, while population increases in and around the city of Gunnison were much slower.

¹ <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-places-in-the-us-where-people-live-the-longest-2014-3>

² A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. (US Census)

³ A family consists of a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related by birth, marriage or adoption. (US Census)

- The population of the city and county of Gunnison has become more culturally diverse during the past two decades, and between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population grew by 80 percent. These ethnic shifts reflect national trends, and on a local level have affected social service needs, educational practice and other government service functions.
- The City of Gunnison, with a median age of 23, is the youngest incorporated city in the state of Colorado.
- Published life expectancy rates for Gunnison are significant and these figures are attributed to life-style choices and the relatively high affluence level of seniors in the community.
- The composition of households has been shifting both locally and nationally from traditional family units to single provider household heads and households comprised of non-related members. This demographic shift will likely influence market shifts for housing types and increase demand for smaller units and a variety of multi-family units.
- The average number of persons per household since 1990 has remained constant at 2.2 persons per household.

SECTION 3: LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PROFILE

3.1 Historical Context

Today's developed urban area is largely the product of the first subdivision plat maps for the towns of Gunnison and West Gunnison which were recorded in the 1880s. These early plat maps incorporated the wide street design, enabling a four-horse wagon team an adequate turning radius. Individual lots, with a general dimension of 25 feet by 125, were the norm of these early plat maps. These plat layouts provide easy and convenient circulation that still benefits the community. They also provide a relatively dense land use pattern, which helps to facilitate efficient utility service extensions.

Current city land use patterns are also influenced by the regional rail system and the location of the local rail yard facilities. Commerce functions were located along the main streets and residential uses were planned and integrated into the plats.

Land use decisions implemented during the 20th Century also had profound influence upon the current land use pattern. Land dedications in 1901 associated with the establishment of the Colorado State Normal School (now Western State Colorado University) are a significant factor affecting the today's land uses. In 1934 Ben Jorgensen dedicated land to the City for the development of Jorgensen Park, which provides an appealing city entrance to this day. Purchasing the VanTuyl Ranch for the protection of the city's well-head recharge area has fulfilled not only that intention, but has also provided recreation and educational opportunities for the community. Other examples include the development of the County Fairgrounds at its present location, development the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport and several annexations throughout the past that have increased the incorporated land area.

3.2 Existing City Land Uses

Downtown Central Business District. The downtown area provides many amenities including the Arts Center, restaurants, galleries, retail shops and services. Over the last few decades there have been multiple attempts to explore the physical design elements of the downtown district to determine whether there are capital improvements that may help enhance the neighborhood

functions of the Central Business District (CBD). It is important to understand that downtown revitalization is a fairly complex topic and generally involves discussions including:

- architectural thematic style (design guidelines and standards);
- streetscape design (landscaping, street furniture, lighting, signage, utilitarian items);
- traffic circulation needs;
- parking demand and proximity;
- pedestrian and non-motorized circulation;
- utility service functions;
- snow removal;
- prioritizing capital expenditures needs; and,
- anticipating budget implications for long term maintenance needs.

Community discussions regarding downtown revitalization go back to the mid-1990s. In 1995 City Council took on the topic and began a process to develop a *Downtown Improvement Plan*, although a plan was never adopted.

At that time, the Main Street irrigation ditch system terminated on the street-edge and the sidewalk section was approximately eight feet wide. Streetscape trees were immature or did not exist, and planters were sparsely distributed along the road corridors. The asphalt mat was deteriorated on Main Street and Tomichi Avenue.

Actions taken as a result of the 1995 downtown revitalization process were significant. The City's capital project expenditures, implemented over a four year period, exceeded \$396,000. Streetscape improvements included two-foot sidewalk extensions on both sides of the first three blocks of North Main Street; a planter and additional pedestrian space was developed in front of the Arts Center; utilitarian features (benches, trash receptacles, etc.) were added; a water feature was developed at the IOOF park; a drip irrigation system was added to sustain the new street tree plantings; and the intersection of Tomichi Avenue and Main Street was repaved with a concrete apron.

Revitalization actions have continued to take place since the 1990s. Perhaps the most striking change has been the increase of organized activities occurring downtown. For example, the Farmers Market is now a summer mainstay, but in 2004 when it was first proposed there was a community debate about the ramifications of the street closure. The IOOF Park has also become the staging point for numerous events including the Growler Bike Race, the Colorado Pro-Challenge, and July 4th events. The City is negotiating with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows for the purchase of the IOOF Park.

Between 2008 and 2012 the Council once again took up the discussion of downtown revitalization. During this timeframe, discussion focused on the IOOF Park and the potential for creating a pedestrian mall area. The west half of the 100 block of East Virginia Avenue; the northern half of the 100 block of South Main Street; and half of the 100 block of West Georgia Street were identified as possible sites for a road closure. At that time, Virginia Avenue seemed to be the primary site for considering a pedestrian mall.

In 2009 the City invited a Community Revitalization Partnership team to visit the community and critique the physical attributes of the downtown area. The resulting *Community Revitalization Partnership Report* addressed a streetscape plan that focused on the following elements:

- pedestrian usability
- landscaping

- utilitarian items
- signage
- irrigation system
- parking

The *Community Revitalization Partnership Report* noted that the city lacked a branding identity; there was little collaboration between downtown interest groups; historic architecture in downtown helps create a unique downtown district; downtown is easy to walk; pedestrians can easily commute to the downtown; and the night lighting of the street helps to denote an active area.



In 2010 the City embarked upon a public outreach process regarding the pedestrian mall revitalization project. A survey was developed by City staff and distributed to 354 members of the Chamber of Commerce. A total of 97 surveys were completed and returned. An open house was also held and approximately 20 community members attended the event. The consensus was that a pedestrian park would be a positive attribute for the community, but it was also recognized that some of businesses could experience significantly negative effects.

A combination of factors stalled the discussion of the pedestrian mall concept. These included concerns expressed by potentially affected retailers who would lose street-front parking; the effects of diminished street connectivity; the fact that the City did not own the IOOF Park; the costs associated with developing site plans and civil engineering plans for the project; and, other funding priorities that were considered to be very important for maintaining community service levels.

It is important to note that the downtown is not necessarily broken. Actions taken during the past 20 years, including easy parking access, have been integral in attracting tourists to downtown. The sidewalk system is intriguing and inviting to visitors. Sandwich board signs help retailers reach clients, and merchandise displays also attract shoppers. The existing street trees are becoming more mature with taller canopies that are less obtrusive to the walking experience. Organized events are also helping to stimulate downtown activity.

West Gunnison. Several significant land use actions have been initiated since the adoption of the *City of Gunnison Master Plan* (2007). The *West Gunnison Neighborhood Plan*, adopted in 2008, focused on defining appropriate strategies for the infill development in the southwestern quadrant of the city. Water and sewer services in this part of the city were historically served by a metropolitan district and there was no organized plan to address development of the area. The plan focused on extending a street grid system into this under-served area and on providing connectivity to the existing city street system; the plan proposes sidewalks and trails to local streets; identifies the conceptual engineering design needs to manage stormwater runoff; describes the future land use types and densities; and elaborates upon utility services and capabilities. At the time the *West Gunnison Neighborhood Plan* was adopted 83 acres were

undeveloped. In 2014 approximately 53 acres remain undeveloped. The majority of the undeveloped area is in Residential Mixed Use (RMU) or Multi-family Residential (R-3) zoning. Several natural constraints, including wetlands, floodplains and irrigation ditches are found in the neighborhood and will affect development plans in some of the planning area.

Gunnison Rising. In 2007 the City entered into discussions with Gunnison Valley Properties, LLC about the potential of annexing the Gunnison Rising property located directly east of the city. Discussions and processing of the annexation took approximately three years and was completed in early 2010. This annexation territory, encompassing approximately 633 acres, is bisected by US Highway 50 and extends nearly three miles past the previous city limits. The annexation was thoroughly deliberated in the public process and the developer and the City benefited because future development will follow a detailed master plan completed by the public process.

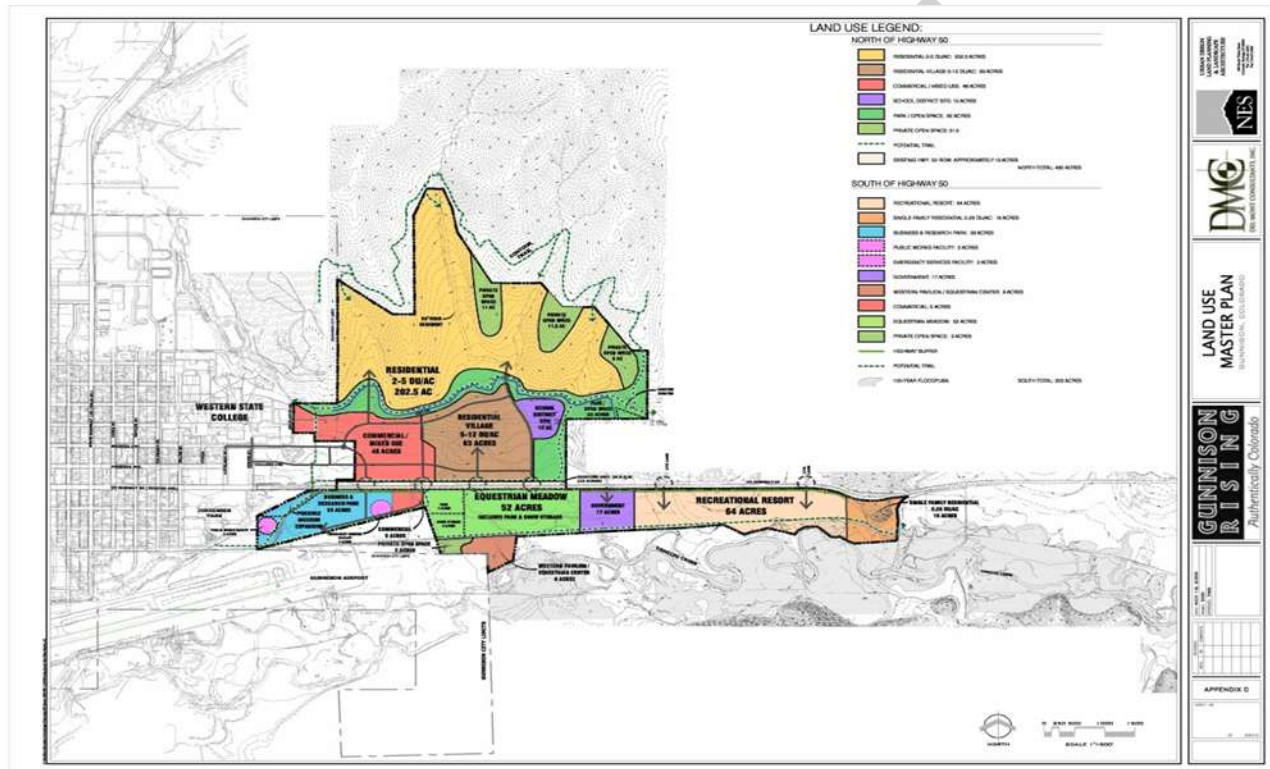


The annexation was zoned as a Planned Unit Development (PUD), and there are a variety of land uses envisioned for the site. Specific emphasis was placed upon the integration of land uses and street corridor extensions in relation to the WSCU campus and the other parts of the existing city urban core. Contemplated uses include residential, commercial development, open space and trails, an RV park, and a government campus area adjacent to the Tomichi Creek Wildlife Area. The land use types are summarized in the table below. The planning process also included the development of regional stormwater master plan and the *U.S. Highway 50 Access Control Plan* approved by the Colorado Department of Transportation.

GUNNISON RISING LAND USE TYPES			
LAND USE TYPE	ACRES	DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE	NON-RESIDENTIAL USE
Single-Family Residential	16	0.26	
Residential	234	1-5	
Multi-Family Residential Village	73	5-12	
Commercial			20,000 sq.ft.
Commercial/Mixed Use	48	TBD	TBD
Commercial RV Resort	64	350 sites	
Commercial Western Pavilion			I-Bar Pavilion
Industrial Modified Business and Research Park	37		Light industrial / research and development
Government	17		Government facilities
Open Space			

There has been no development in Gunnison Rising as of 2014. The Commercial Western Pavilion (I-Bar Ranch) is being used for summer concerts and a road accessing the property directly from Highway 50 was constructed in spring 2014.

In 2012 the WSCU Foundation was gifted approximately 18 acres of land in and adjacent to Gunnison Rising, bordering the campus. A portion of the gifted land is located in the Wilson Tract subdivision which borders Highway 50. It also includes a portion of the hay meadow bordering Escalante Drive on the eastern fringe of the campus. Preliminary discussions with WSCU representatives have indicated future land uses may include faculty housing and recreation fields. Development on this donated land area may require some changes to the approved *Gunnison Rising PUD Development Standards*, but conceptual ideas regarding these future uses seem to be compatible with the existing master plan documents of the PUD.



VanTuyl Ranch. The VanTuyl Ranch (Ranch) area was purchased from the United States Land Office in 1881 and changed hands through the years until Raymond and Louis VanTuyl purchased the property in 1960. Portions of the original ranch were within the City boundary and other segments of the property were later annexed into the City. The original ranch included the Palisades and Gills Addition, VanTuyl Village, the 40-acre Community School site, and the Gunnison County Library site.

In 1993 the Ranch was purchased by the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) and was subsequently sold to the City of Gunnison and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The property owned by the City was then leased back to Raymond VanTuyl, who continued agricultural operations and lived on the Ranch until his death in 2008. A 1.25 mile segment of the City's Outer Loop trail system was constructed on the Ranch in 2008, which resulted in a significant increase of public use on the property. As the area becomes more accessible to the community it is important that the fundamental ecological processes, agricultural operations and water protection be maintained, and that the human influences on them are monitored and managed.

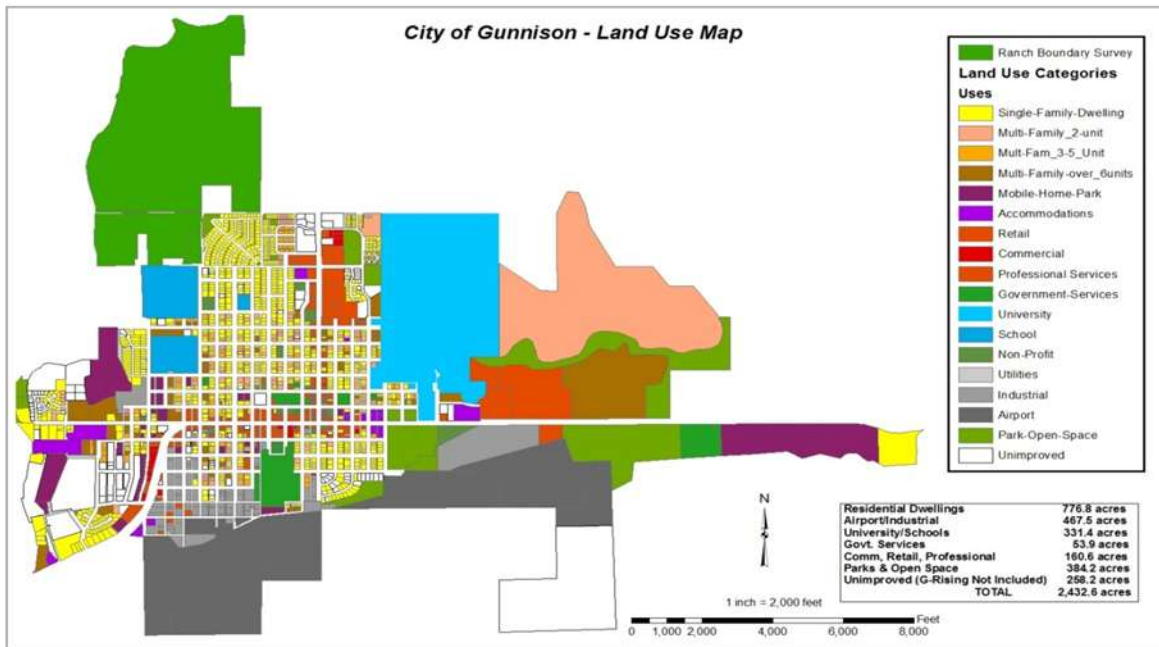
In spring 2009 the City received a \$50,000 Planning Grant from the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Board (GOCO) to develop the *VanTuyl Ranch Management Plan (Management Plan)*. The *Management Plan* provides the City with a means to use the Ranch to the greatest benefit to the citizens while protecting the valuable resources on the property and preserving the ranching heritage that has been so important to the Gunnison Valley.

Between 2008 and 2013 approximately 2.5 miles of additional trails were added to the Ranch, and in 2013 the Ranch was annexed into the city. Work on the Ranch properties continues today. In 2013 the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the City submitted a grant application to the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and were awarded \$450,000+ grant to design and complete a river restoration project focusing on improving fish habitat. The total grant value, which will be completed in two years, is approximately \$750,000. The project will include a trail to access the Gunnison River for fishing and recreation.



Today's Land Use Profile. Historic actions discussed to this point highlight only some of the decisions influencing land use configurations found in the city today. The *City of Gunnison Master Plan 2007* included a model of future development potential. This model indicated that the city was about 75 percent built out, and undeveloped land, excluding Gunnison Rising, could accommodate development for the next 25+ years, based on historic and existing building trends. The major undeveloped areas consisted of the VanTuyl subdivision on Highway 135 and the West Gunnison Neighborhood. The Gunnison Rising Annexation substantially increased the buildable area and it is anticipated that future development within the city will include infill development of the historical city boundary, and development of Gunnison Rising.

Growth and development during the recession of the past six years has been minimal. Between 2008 and 2013 new residential development was slow with the low point in 2011 when only two new dwelling units were constructed. During this same time period however, several major public construction projects occurred. The RE-1J School District initiated major remodels at Gunnison High School, the Gunnison Community School, and the Lake Elementary School. City Market completed a 10,000 square foot addition to the local store. Gunnison County constructed the County Public Safety Building and the City constructed the new police department building. During the past year (2013) the Blue Mesa Mall was subdivided and utilities were installed. During this same period the WSCU campus saw many new capital facility projects including construction of the Borick Building, new University Center and field house, and the remodel of Taylor Hall.



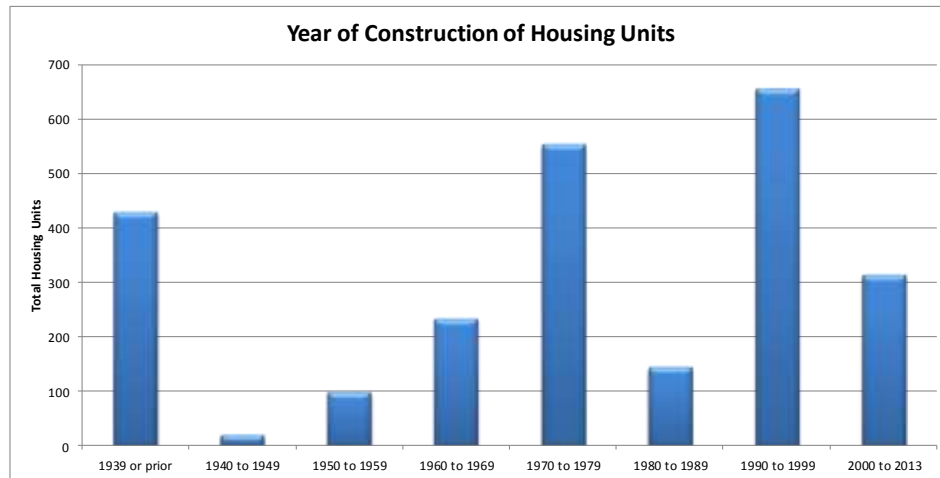
3.3 Housing Trends

Home Ownership. Nationally, homeownership reached an all-time high of 66 percent in 2000. In Gunnison in the year 2000, only 43 percent of the housing units were owner-occupied and by 2010 that number decreased to 35 percent. Conversely, approximately 59 percent of the housing stock in the City is rental units, a function of rental demand driven by university students and transient employees who work in the service and recreation industries.

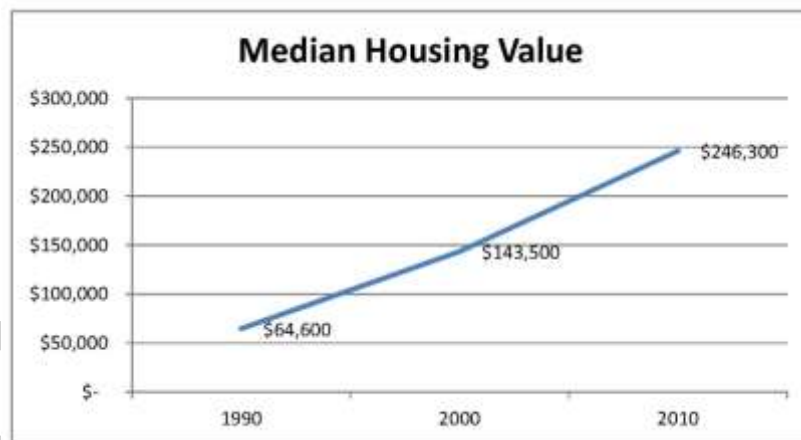
Since 1990 Census data has tracked renter-occupied housing units. The number of rental units in Gunnison has increased by 451 units since 1990, bringing the percentage of the housing inventory that is in rentals to 58 percent. The median contract rent has increased from \$258 in 1990 to \$801 in 2010 (a 68 percent increase). The vacancy rate of rentals is 11.8%.

Housing Inventory. The number of housing units increased 24 percent between 1990 and 2010, with the greatest increase between 1990 and 1999 when 656 units were added to the housing inventory. In 2010, 90 percent of the housing units were occupied. This number includes 443 building permits issued in the city for new residential buildings between 1990 and 2013¹. The housing units included 347 single-family dwellings and 96 duplex and multi-family units. In 2014 Western State Colorado University has lodging capacity for 1,252; an increase of 23 beds since 1990.

¹ Building permit data is not available from 1990 to 1993, which explains the difference in the number of units added.



Affordable Housing. In 1990 only four owner-occupied housing units were valued at over \$150,000. In 2010 there were 622 housing units valued over \$150,000. The median home values have changed as indicated in the adjacent chart.



Based on the data, between 2000 and 2010 the median household income increased 34 percent and median housing value increased 42 percent. Assuming a 30 year mortgage, 10 percent down payment, and five percent interest rate, only 18 percent of the population would be able to meet the minimum qualification to purchase a home but representations about affordability are skewed by the large university population and people employed in entry-level service positions, which are generally paid lower wages.

The 2014 *Land Development Code* (Section 13) establishes incentives for land uses that include the development of affordable housing. Incentives for affordable housing must comply with the provisions of the *Gunnison Valley Regional Affordable Housing Guidelines*. The City has also supported recent housing projects implemented by Habitat for Humanity and Community Rebuilds.

3.4 Adjacent Land Uses Outside of the City

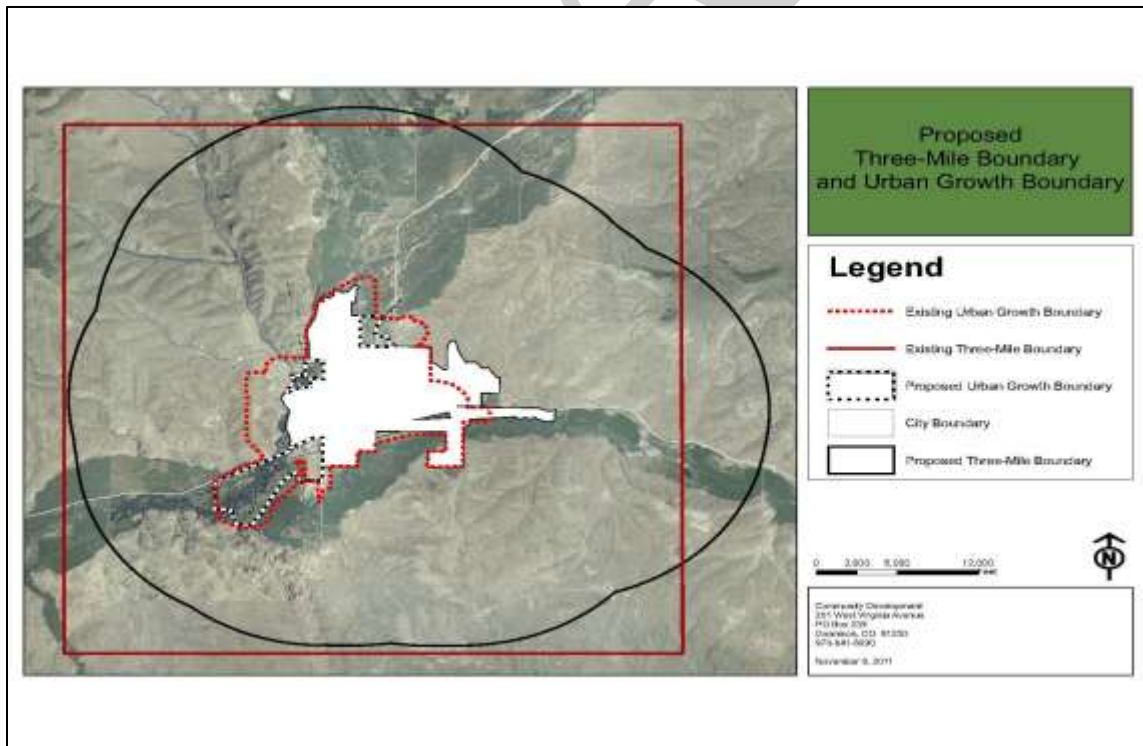
Land uses immediately outside the city limits are largely residential, with some existing commercial and agricultural uses in the entrance corridors. Moving further away from the urban fringe, large lot residential development becomes more prominent (e.g., one unit per five-acre parcel). While the large lot residential developments were historically popular and promoted by state laws exempting 35-acre tracts from certain local county review standards, they have some inherent disadvantages. Automobile dependence is one of the major problems with sprawling

development and utility service capabilities are not efficient. Fortunately, the majority of development outside the city limits has been focused in subdivision areas that provide central utilities. In fact, during the past 30 years, over 70 percent of the new residential construction in the Three Mile planning area of unincorporated Gunnison County has occurred in subdivisions with central utility services. Buyers recognize value in land areas served by central water and sewer utilities, and development patterns can be influenced by decisions associated with extending central utilities.

Three-Mile and Urban Growth Boundaries. The Three Mile boundary is a standard measurement for the area that exists within three miles of the city limits. The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is identified by a mapped boundary, separating land that is urban or is planned to become urban, from that which is to remain rural. It accounts for lands which may eventually seek to be annexed because of the feasibility of connecting to wastewater, domestic water, storm sewer and roadway utilities, and integrating compatible land uses with the existing urban core.

The purpose of an Urban Growth Boundary is to define specific geographic areas that can be efficiently serviced by existing or extended infrastructure facilities (roads, water, and wastewater) and public services (police, fire, etc.). Focusing development into an urban core increases service efficiencies and preserves open space.

The Urban Growth Boundary was first mapped in 1997 with projected land uses identified within that boundary. The UGB and Three-Mile boundaries have been revised by the Planning and Zoning Commission during their annual review of the City's *Three Mile Plan*. These amendments reflect changing conditions of the area including annexations, infrastructure extensions, and transportation system functions.



The proposed Urban Growth Boundary, as indicated on the map above, is smaller than the existing boundary because in many instances, historically developed areas around the city do not lend themselves to consideration for annexation and extension of City services. For example, Island Acres, west of the Gunnison River was platted without any real consideration of future extension of internal streets across the river. Another example is the parcels north of the city that were created by deeds before the time of subdivision powers and/or the platting of 35-acre tracts which is allowed by the *Colorado State Statutes*. Airport facilities located on the southern fringe of the city preclude the potential city expansion into Gold Basin. However, the most significant factor relates to providing municipal services for future development contemplated within today's incorporated city boundary.

Intergovernmental Planning and Service Agreements. Two intergovernmental agreements between the City of Gunnison and Gunnison County are relevant for land use purposes. The first is the *Wastewater Treatment Facility Agreement* of July 3, 2001. The second is the *Three Mile Plan/Urban Growth Boundary Intergovernmental Agreement* also adopted on July 3, 2001. As part of these agreements, the City and County jointly review Land Use Change permit applications for projects within the Three Mile planning area and Urban Growth Boundary. The agreements do not include designation of land use types within the Urban Growth Boundary. The *Three Mile Plan/Urban Growth Boundary* agreement has been helpful, but should be revised to reflect changes in the City's *Master Plan* and *Land Development Code*, and Gunnison County's *Comprehensive Plan*.

3.5 Observations - Land Use and Development Summary

- The 1995 downtown revitalization process was very successful in transforming the downtown streetscape appeal. Wider sidewalks, combined with coordinated utilitarian features and additional street trees helped transform the pedestrian experience. Numerous events occur in downtown area and the existing facilities are essential for conducting these events. Retailers have been allowed to use public sidewalks for merchandise displays and sandwich board sign advertising. However, narrowing Main Street has been viewed with mixed results. The narrow lane geometry is confining; large trucks are constrained by lane widths; vehicle lane changes can be difficult during peak hours; and exiting and entering parked cars on the street-side can be daunting.
- The concept of a pedestrian mall has a lengthy history. While a pedestrian mall may provide appeal to the downtown, it will impact street connectivity, reduce the amount of public parking, and eliminate direct parking access to several retail businesses.
- Prior to the annexation of Gunnison Rising, approximately 75 percent of the city land area was developed. The annexation of Gunnison Rising has resulted in a detailed *PUD Master Plan* addressing land use, transportation and utility services to accommodate future development of this area. The City has gained certainty for controlling the growth in this urban fringe area, and the developer has gained certainty through land use entitlements granted by the annexation.
- Within the city limits, there is enough vacant land to accommodate population growth projections for twenty years.
- Affordable housing needs in the City differ significantly from the housing needs of Crested Butte, Mt. Crested Butte and the Upper East River Valley. A significant portion of the city housing demand is generated by WSCU students, and on-campus student housing facilities

accommodate 50 percent of the student body. The City's *Land Development Code* incorporates an incentives-based approach for affordable housing. The City supported recent housing projects implemented by Habitat for Humanity, Community Rebuilds and the Gunnison Regional Housing Authority.

- Future development within the city limits depends upon private investment to finance development of infrastructure services to support these entitlement rights.
- Future extensions of City utilities and services into unincorporated lands governed by Gunnison County will be an important discussion topic in the upcoming *City Comprehensive Plan* update. A greater understanding of service capabilities for utilities, streets, and highway corridors will be an important element to consider during the public input process of the *Comprehensive Plan*.
- Listing of the Gunnison Sage-grouse as either threatened or endangered would have a direct and significant impact upon the future development both within the city boundary and in the three-mile area.
- The *City of Gunnison Land Development Code*, which was adopted in 2014 after many years of debate by the Planning and Zoning Commission, which included opportunities for public input, includes provisions to address protection of the environment as well as protecting the small-town character of the community. This includes solar setbacks; lighting standards to protect the dark skies and neighborhoods from excessive illumination; standards for alternative energy sources; pedestrian circulation facilities to reduce the need for vehicle transportation; natural resource protection standards; and large-scale retail development standards.

SECTION 4: ECONOMIC AND FISCAL FUNCTIONS

4.1 Population Change and Local Economy

As noted previously in Section 2, population change is largely dependent upon changes in the regional and local economy which impact the number and type of employment opportunities and their associated earnings and benefits. Population forecasts are prepared in the context of perceptions and/or forecasts of the local economy along with other factors that influence population change.

Employment trends in the city and county through the first half of the 20th Century were stable with agriculture, education and recreation (hunting/fishing) employment sectors being the mainstay of the local economy. Beginning in the 1960s the ski industry rose to prominence and continues to be a central component of the local economy, while the agriculture sector experienced steady declines since the end of World War II.

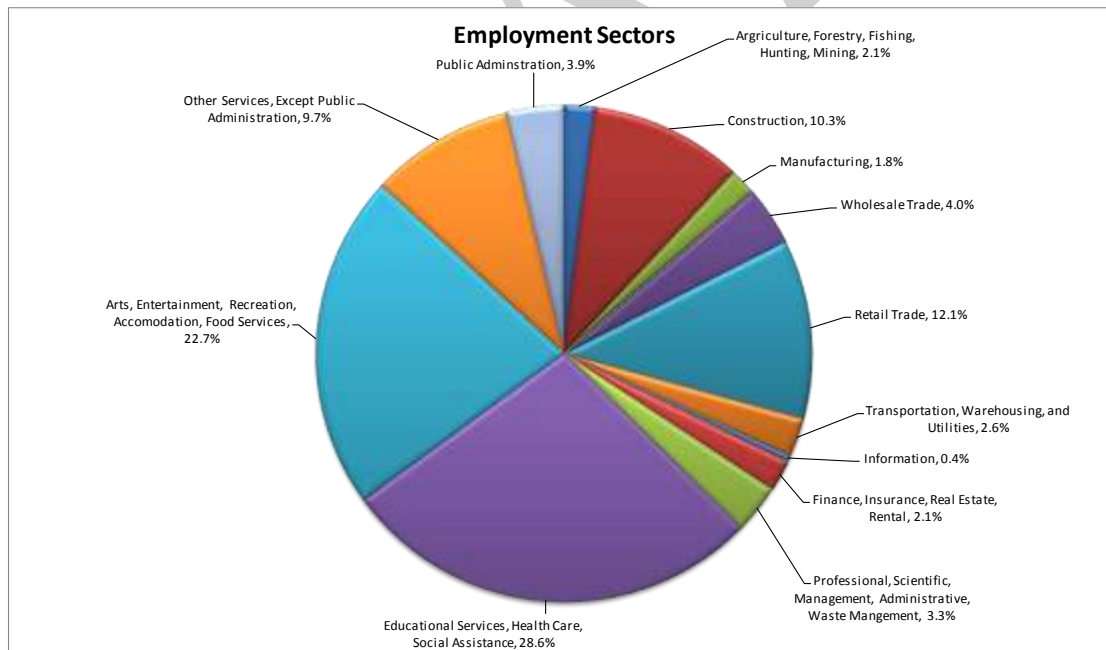
4.2 Employment Sector Trends

The early settlers of Gunnison turned to ranching when the mining boom ended in the late 1800s. According to the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, ranching is the oldest continuous industry in Gunnison County, employing upwards of 350 people on 175,000 acres. Ranching contributes \$46 million annually to the local economy. Irrigated meadows produce 41,000 tons of hay each year and 15,000 head of cattle live in Gunnison County.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for ranching to be economically sustainable. According to www.citydata.com the average value of agricultural products sold per farm is \$49,133 while the average production expense per farm is \$43,255. The low profit margin of ranching combined with skyrocketing real estate prices in the 1990s and early 2000s threatened the ranching industry, resulting in conversion of some agricultural land to development. However, since 1996 efforts to conserve the agricultural heritage have resulted in the conservation of 30,000 acres of land in Gunnison County through the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

While the economic influence of the community's historic agrarian dominance of the 20th Century has waned, the value of open space is enormous and is a dominant draw for tourism. A report titled [*Economic Impact of the Livestock Industry in Gunnison County, Colorado*](#) (CSU Extension Office, 2006), notes that agriculture uses account for approximately 96 percent of total private land use, implying that a very small proportion of the county is currently found in relatively high intensity or irreversible land uses (e.g., houses, stores, factories). However, like Colorado in general, the number of agricultural operations and the amount of land in agriculture are on a downward trend. From 1997 to 2002 the number of farms decreased by 7 percent and the average size of farms decreased by 15 percent suggesting some conversion of private lands to higher intensity uses (Colorado Agricultural Statistics Service, 2005).

The major employers in the county are related to education (the university and school district); federal and state natural resource managers (BLM, USFS, NPS); and tourism-related businesses (accommodations and food service). The pie chart identifies the major employment sectors in 2012.



During the past 30+ years the service employment sector associated with tourism has increased significantly. Construction, professional services and retail sales jobs also increased significantly. Today, these employment sectors remain strong, but employment numbers in construction, food and accommodation services, and health services have seen substantial reductions since the 2008 national recession.

Between 2000 and 2010 persons over the age of 16 who were working increased from 53 percent of the population to 57 percent. Table 1 shows the employment industry sectors for Gunnison. The percentage of the workforce in management and professional occupations decreased over the decade, while service positions increased. This is likely due to people losing professional and management positions and replacing them with service occupations.

During the decade the following industries grew as a percentage of the workforce:

TABLE 1 GROWTH INDUSTRIES	
Industry¹	Percent Change
Manufacturing	+1.09%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	+0.68%
Educational, health, social services	+4.44%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	+1.26%
Other Services ²	+5.53%

The decline in the following industries is indicative of the economic recession since 2008:

Industry	Percent Change
Construction	-2.17%
Wholesale Trade	-0.21%
Retail Trade	-2.57%
Information	-1.19%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	-5.75%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management	-1.34%

4.3 Employment Trends

While the most recent national recession was very difficult for local businesses, and some establishments did not survive the economic downturn, several small scale basic sector businesses have made Gunnison their home and provide employment in the community while exporting their products and services.

Diversification of the basic sector, by promoting science, technology, and small business manufacturing, should be pursued to help balance cyclic trends associated with tourism, service and construction employment sectors.

¹ Information on industry relates to the kind of business conducted by a person's employing organization.

² The "Other Services (Except Public Administration)" sector comprises establishments engaged in providing services not specifically provided for elsewhere in the classification system. Establishments in this sector are primarily engaged in activities such as equipment and machinery repairing, promoting or administering religious activities, grant making, advocacy, and providing dry-cleaning and laundry services, personal care services, death care services, pet care services, photofinishing services, temporary parking services, and dating services. Private households that engage in employing workers on or about the premises in activities primarily concerned with the operation of the household are included in this sector.

4.4 Tourism Trends

Gunnison Chamber of Commerce. The [Gunnison Chamber of Commerce](#) tracks the number of people who come to the visitor center each day, excluding locals. During the past three years an average of 60,000+ customers visited the Gunnison Chamber offices annually.

Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association (TA). The [Tourism Association](#) is a destination marketing organization (DMO) dedicated to advertising and marketing Gunnison County as a year-round visitor destination. The TA operates as a contractor to the Local Marketing District (LMD) which is governed by the Gunnison County Board of Commissioners. According to the Tourism Association, in 2012, total direct spending by visitors to Gunnison County reached \$150.6 million, generating more than \$5.5 million in local taxes and representing more than 1,870 tourism-related jobs.¹ This is an increase of 43.36 percent in total travel spending between 2000 and 2012.

National Park System. Gunnison is a gateway community because it is an entrance host to the [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#) and the [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#). The Black Canyon, established as a National Park in 1999, has an annual visitation rate of approximately 215,000 persons per year. National Park Service (NPS) statistics indicate that approximately one million visitation hours occur annually at the Black Canyon.

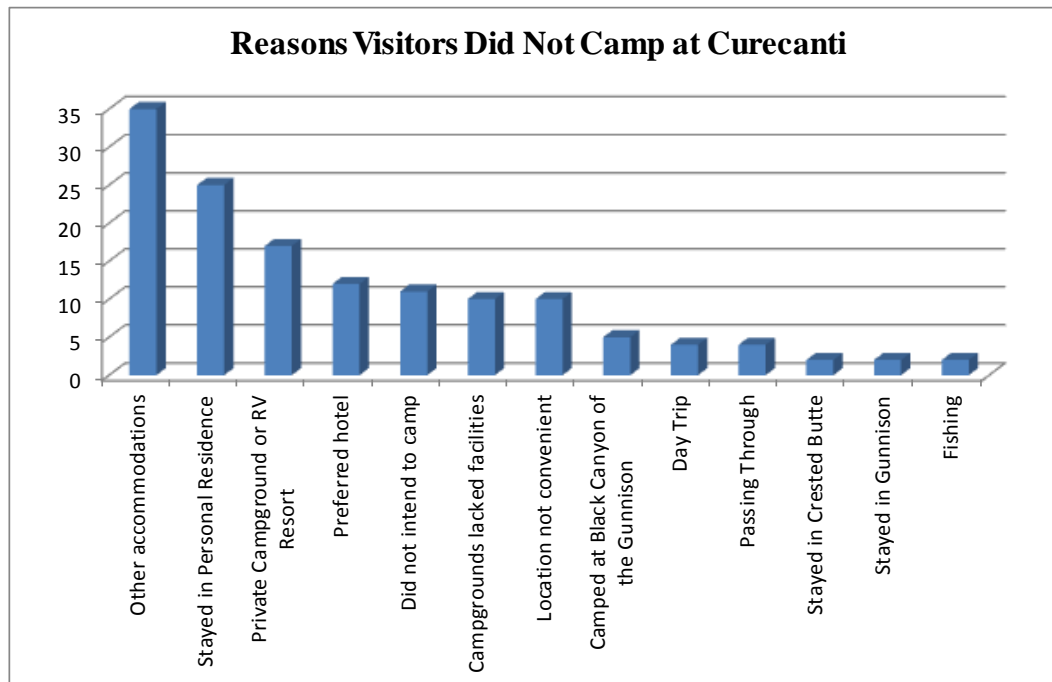
Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA), located on the east edge of the National Park boundary, averages one million visitors annually, and the NPS reports approximately 3.5 million visitor hours annually. The correlation between visitor statistics during drought years in the past 14 years span seems to be strong; the three drought years of 2002, 2012, and 2013 correspond to the lowest three years of recorded visitations during the drought and recession.

The NPS conducted a [visitor study](#) in 2010. Of those who responded, 47 percent were from Montrose, Mesa, Gunnison, and El Paso counties. The survey found that 75 percent of the visitors obtained information about the Curecanti NRA prior to their visit either from previous visits (51percent); word of mouth (40 percent); or from the Curecanti NRA website (31 percent). Fifty four percent indicated that they would use the park website to obtain information for future visits. This indicates that Chamber of Commerce visitations and the Curecanti Recreation Area headquarters are not visitors' main source of information and that the internet and websites have a major influence on tourism.

The survey also reported that the average length of stay was 2.2 days at Curecanti and 4.8 days within a 50-mile radius of Gunnison. Approximately 30 percent of the visitors who stayed overnight in the area camped at the Curecanti NRA – that is to say, many park visitors stay at other locations in the Basin, but include the park visit as part of their vacation venue. The chart on the following page summarizes the reasons visitors did not stay at the recreation area:²

¹ <http://www.gcbta.com>

² Some responses were very similar so they were consolidated.



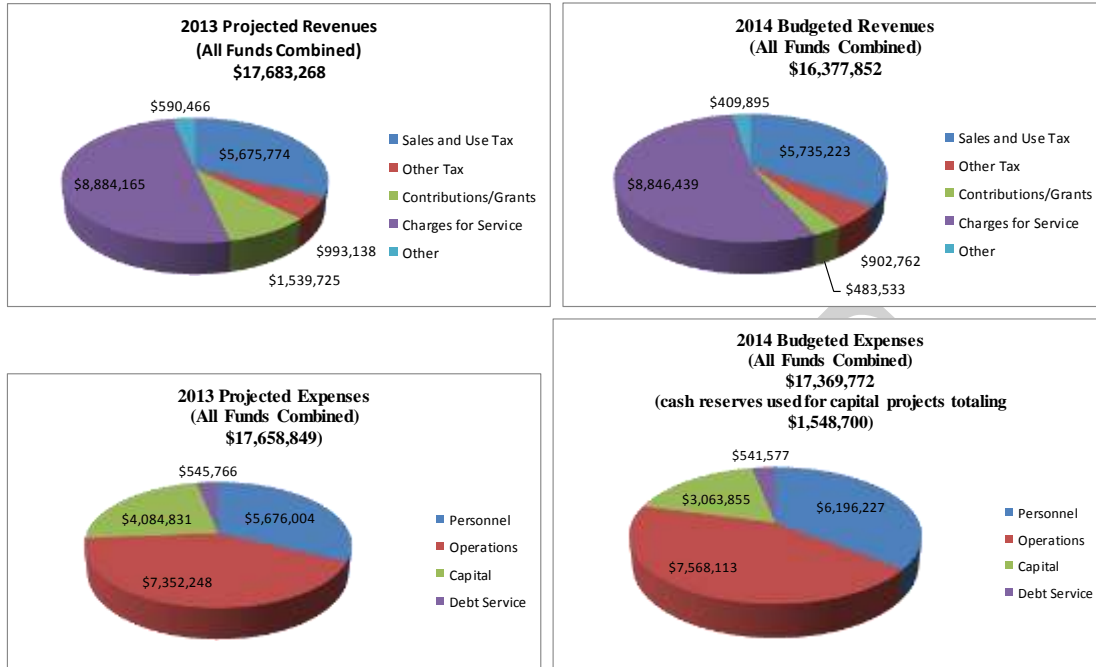
Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR). As a destination ski resort, CBMR has also endured the impacts of the national recession and drought during the past several years. In the late 1990s annual reports exceeded 550,000 skier days. Conversely, during the 2011-2012 season, the resort saw a 15.7 percent decline in overall skier visits and a 10 percent drop in season pass visits. The resort was also more than 15 percent down in destination visits. CBMR attributed the drop in attendance to the weather, but the decline in airline seats into the valley also played a role. There were about 11 percent fewer seats flying into the Gunnison-Crested Butte Airport compared to the 2010-2011 ski season.

Skier visits since 2012 have increased and 367,659 skier days were reported for the 2013-2014 season. Airplane flight load factors increased 9 percentage points in the 2013-14 winter season and the air-flight visitors, the majority of whom were winter visitors, contributed approximately \$4 million to the local economy. About 23 percent of the 99 CBMR employees reside in Gunnison.

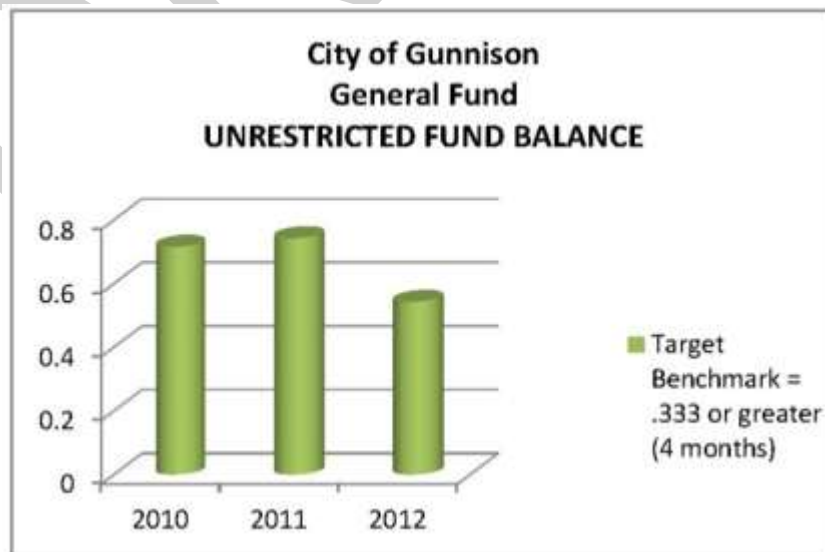
Community Events. Numerous annual events attract visitors to the city and Gunnison valley. Some of the traditional events include the July 4th fireworks show, Cattlemen's Days, and the Gunnison Car Show. Newer events include the Colorado Adventure Sports Festival and the Gunnison Growler mountain bike race. Road bicycle events, such as the USA Pro-Challenge, Ride the Rockies, and the Bicycle Tour of Colorado often include the Gunnison hub for their routes.

4.5 City Government Budget Trends

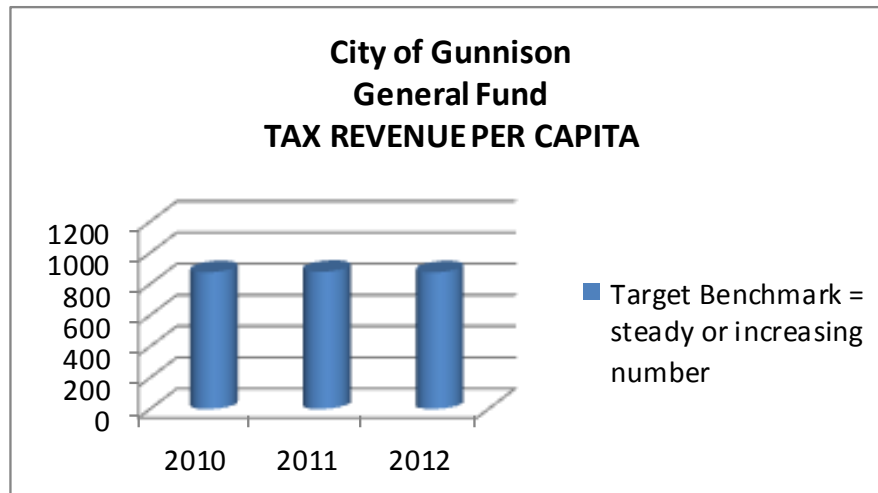
General Fund. The majority of revenues for the City of Gunnison are generated through charges for service and sales and use taxes. While these revenue sources remain fairly constant year-to-year, contributions and grants experience greater variation because the grants for projects vary from year-to-year. Because the City budgets revenues conservatively, unanticipated revenues accumulate into cash reserves on an annual basis and are available for capital expenses in subsequent years.



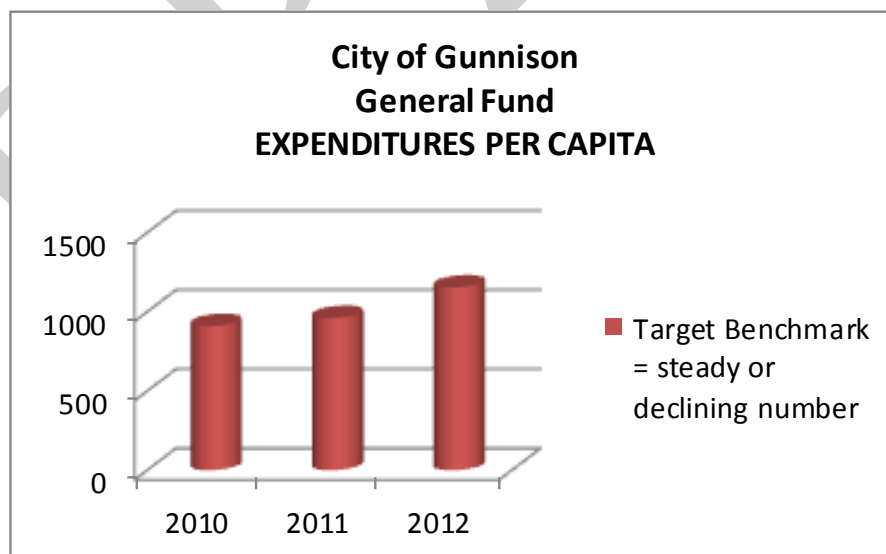
Unrestricted Fund Balance. This chart shows the fund balance (cash reserves that are not designated for a specific purpose) to cover annual expenditures (net of transfers and capital assets). The general fund maintains a healthy fund balance that is available for emergency situations and capital improvements. City Council is presently discussing the policy for the fund balance amount.



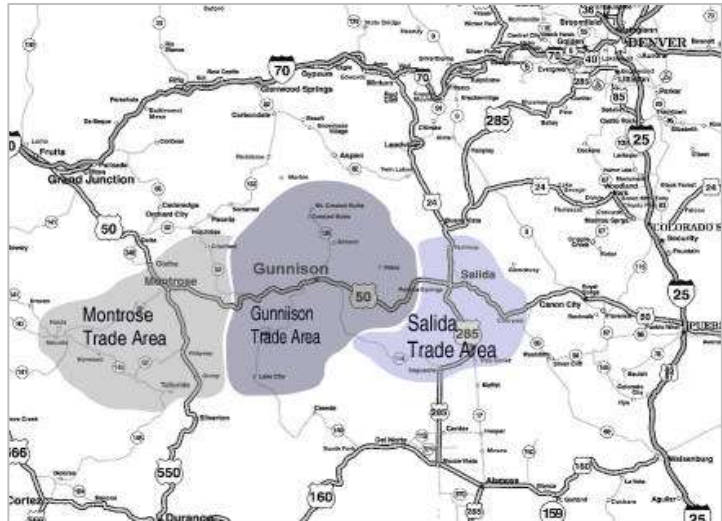
Tax Revenue Per Capita. Based on the city's population of approximately 5,860 people, per capita tax revenues have remained fairly constant at \$875 per person. These revenues include sales and use taxes, property tax, motor vehicle tax, and franchise fees. Other revenues, such as grants and charges for service cover the remaining expenses in the General Fund.



Expenditures Per Capita. Annual expenses for the General Fund are on a slight increase while population estimates from the Colorado State Demographer's office have shown a slight decrease. Therefore the ratio of expenses to population has shown a slight increase over the past three years.



In 2005 the City contracted for the development of the *Big Box Retail in Gunnison - Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis*. While this study is somewhat dated, the economic profile of the community has not changed significantly and the conclusions of the report are still relevant. As noted by the analysis, the retail trade area of Gunnison is large because of the rural nature of the community and the fact that Gunnison is geographically positioned to serve a large geographic area.



The analysis included development of a dynamic model to analyze two well understood phenomenon: *leakage*, which is loss of potential retail sales to other markets as residents travel for the purpose of shopping in other communities and, a product of tourism referred to as *import substitution*. Import substitution is a remedy to leakage—as a tourist destination and gateway community, Gunnison has the potential to increase local spending by nonresidents.

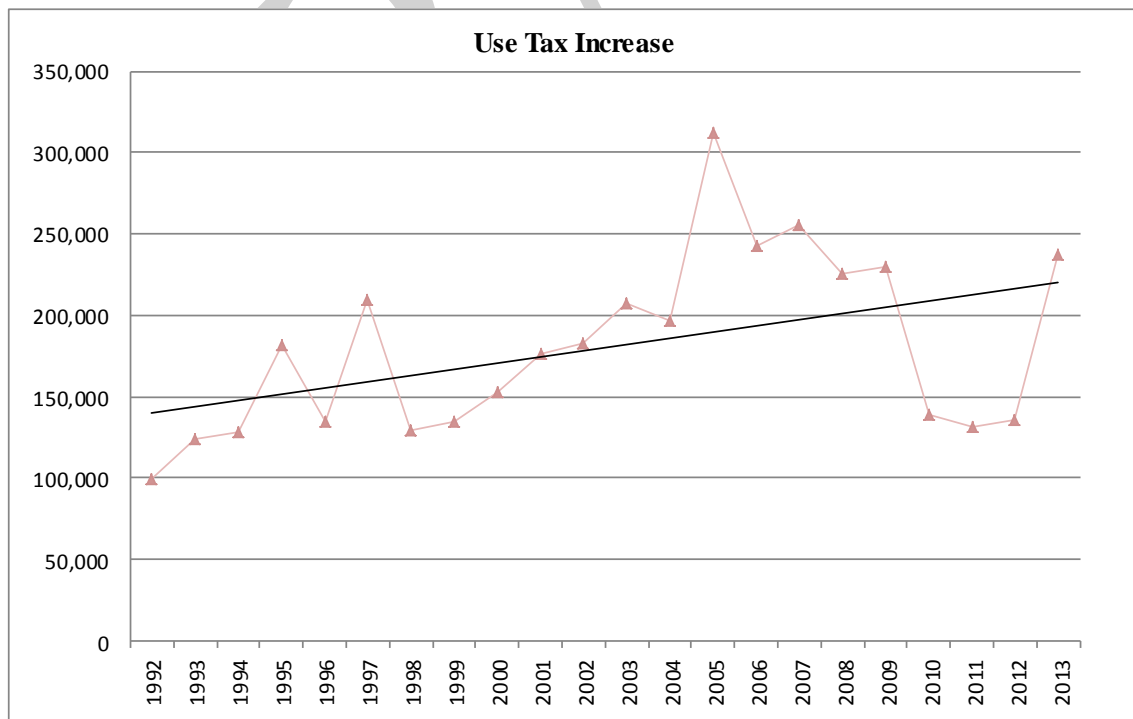
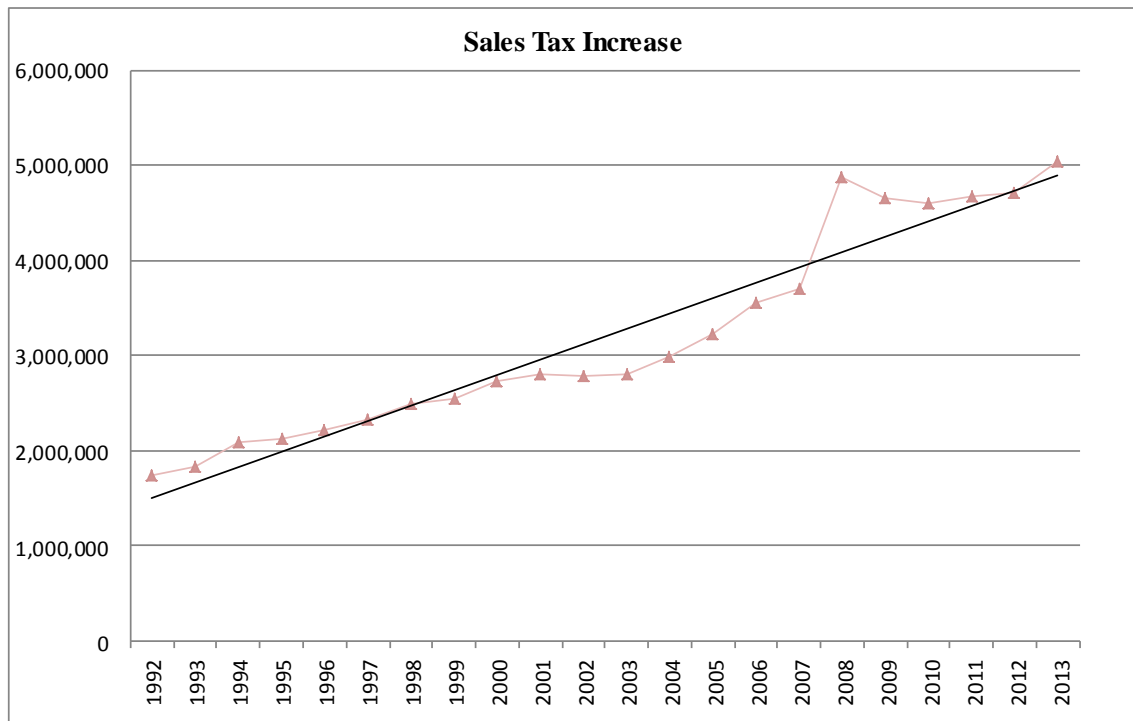
As the cost of goods and services increases over time, sales and use tax revenue also increases. The City tracks tax receipts by the following categories:

TABLE 2 SALES AND USE TAX CATEGORIES	
Sales Tax	Use Tax
Apparel and Clothing	Building Permits
Building Materials	Vehicles
Department and Hardware Stores	
Utilities	
Furniture and Appliances	
Vehicle Sales, Parts and Service*	
Miscellaneous Retail Sales*	
*Prior to 2008 Vehicle Sales, Parts and Service and Miscellaneous Retail Sales were categorized as Use Tax, but for comparison purposes of this report, they are included in Sales Tax for all years.	

Sales Tax trends from 1992 through 2013 demonstrate that business sectors including clothing and apparel, building materials, and furniture and appliances have seen fluctuations. These categories reflect the discretionary income that people have as a result of the general economy.

Use Tax revenue from Building Permits has been more volatile than Sales Tax revenue. There are several factors influencing the extreme fluctuations in building permit activity, including lending practices and market speculation driving demand between 1990 and 2007, and the effects of the national recession. In 2011 only two new residential buildings were constructed. While there have been several large commercial projects in the city during the recession that had a positive impact on the local economy, in most instances the City Use Tax was waived because these capital projects were developed by tax exempt entities.

Construction projects on the Western State Colorado University campus have also been substantial but these projects are not subject to City Use Tax or building permits. Large increases in Use Tax occurred in 1997 when the City Market was built on North Main Street; in 2005 when the Holiday Inn was built; and in 2005, 2006, and 2007 when there was a “boom” in construction of residential units.



4.6 City Revenue Overview

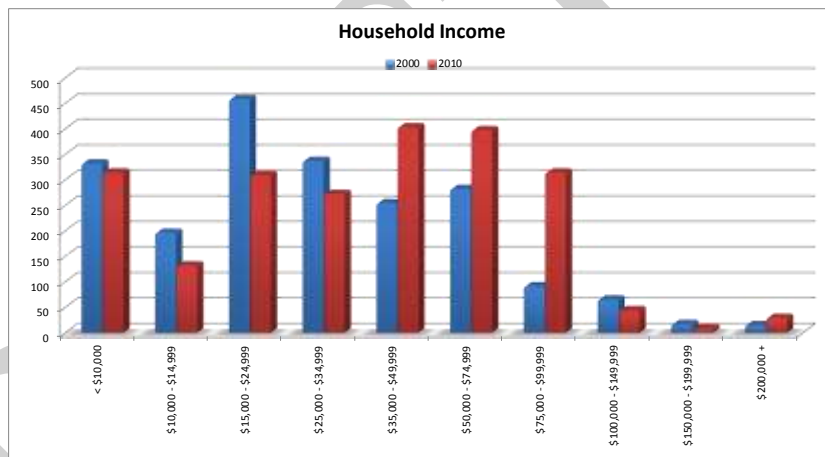
Revenues used to fund city services come from a variety of sources, with the primary dollars being derived through sales tax and billings charged for utility services. Other revenue sources include grants, property tax and charges for recreation programs. The City General Fund accounts for the monies required for police, city administration services, parks and recreation and street maintenance and improvements. Utility services, which include water, wastewater, electrical and refuse, are operated as Enterprise Funds, meaning that their operations are funded through service use billing. Descriptions of these City services are discussed in more detail in Section 10 of this document.

4.7 Sales and Use Tax Collection

During the past 20+ years, sales tax collection for the jurisdictions in the Gunnison Basin reflect the general state of the national economy, with healthy growth between 1990 and 2007, then a sharp downturn in 2008. Tax collections have increased since 2011. Additionally, municipal sales tax trends in the Basin reflect the increasing importance of the summer tourism market.

4.8 Family Income

In the decade between 2000 and 2010, Gunnison County median household income rose by 34 percent, from \$25,768 to \$39,181, while during the same time, the median housing value increased 42 percent. Nationally, the cumulative inflation rate during the decade was 37.2 percent.¹



In 2000 the per capita income was \$15,196 and in 2012 it had increased 14.5 percent to \$17,776.

According to the US Census, in 2000, 10 percent of families in the city of Gunnison were living below the poverty level; in 2010 this number had increased to 18.9 percent. In 2000 23.8 percent of families with children under the age of 5 were living below the poverty level and in 2012 this number increased to 49 percent. This has implications for the educational and health systems because the families require more resources as children enter school. The census did not break household income down by any demographics. One explanation for the increase in the number of people living below the poverty level could be the increase in the female or single head of household as well as the increase in the number of immigrants.

4.9 Observations - Economic and Fiscal Trends

- The fact that 49 percent of the families in Gunnison with children under the age of five are living below the poverty level is alarming.

¹ <http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>

- On May 6, 2014, *Cities Journal* posted a ranking of the top twelve small cities in Colorado¹ and ranked Gunnison as number one. While these types of rankings can be subjective, the exposure that social media provides a community can have a significant impact on tourism.
- Population change is largely dependent upon changes in the region and local economy which influence the number and type of employment opportunities and their associated earnings and benefits.
- The city of Gunnison is the County seat and principal service center for the entire county. The local economy is generally supported by tourism, construction, ranching, and the university. While many of the businesses in the city are “Main Street” retail and service-oriented, there are examples of small scale manufacturing and science/technology businesses helping to diversify local employment opportunities.
- The second home market was a driving force of the construction employment during the past two decades. While the Upper East River Basin is platted with a significant number of undeveloped lots, it is unclear how the second home construction market will fare in the future. Additionally, the housing development in and around Gunnison would be significantly affected if the Gunnison Sage-grouse is listed as an endangered species.
- Tourism activity is dependent upon discretionary spending and tends to fluctuate with national economic trends. The primary source for tourist information about the Gunnison Basin is the internet.
- Gunnison’s economy was disrupted by the 2008 recession and recovery has been slow. Continued softness in the Crested Butte Mountain Resort and the upper valley construction industry has hurt the city’s service economy, but summer tourism has grown and agriculture, hunting and fishing have remained stable. Guest services and eating and drinking establishments are the most vibrant elements of the local economy, while retail is unlikely to increase significantly in the future. Operations of Western State Colorado University have been an important stabilizing influence on the Gunnison economy.
- While there is no real advantage for small manufacturing or technology-related firms to locate in Gunnison, there seems to be an opportunity to attract small niche service and production businesses.
- Gunnison has historical roots to mining but the current gas and oil prices are prohibitive for new exploration in the county. Another contributing factor is local opposition to mining operations, such as the Red Lady Molybdenum mine above Crested Butte and growing opposition in the state to fracking for oil and gas extraction.
- The stability of long winters and short summers likely contributes to the stable population and economic growth of the community.

¹ <http://www.citiesjournal.com/top-12-small-cities-in-colorado/12/>

SECTION 5: NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

5.1 Introduction

The Upper Gunnison Basin is located within portions of the Colorado Plateau Geological Province and the Rocky Mountain Geological Province (United States Geological Survey). Major drainages in the Basin include the East and Slate River drainages, the Taylor River, Tomichi Creek and Ohio Creek. These drainages encompass over 3,330 square miles. The physiographic interface creates strongly differentiated landscapes and biological life zones, and the “headwaters” system is a fundamental element of the diverse ecological system comprising the Basin.

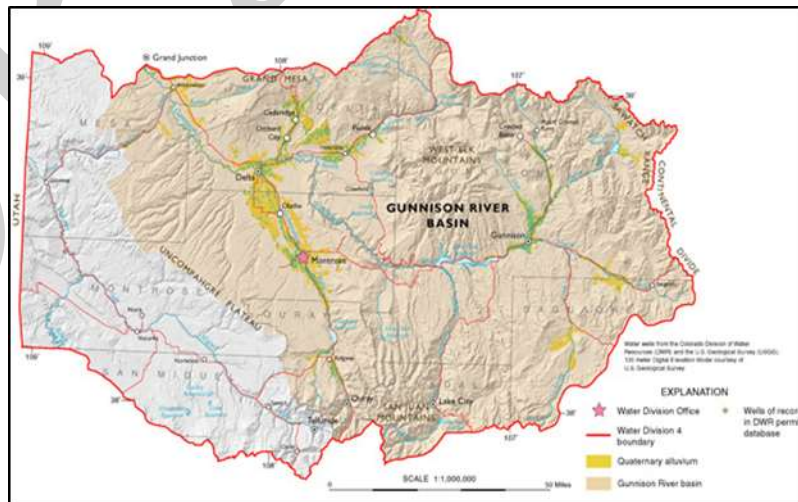
5.2 Water Resources

Background. Issues, laws and policy topics associated with water resources are broad and cannot be thoroughly discussed in this report. In a general context the role of the City in water resource matters is associated with water use, flood hazards and water quality.

The annual precipitation level in Gunnison is approximately 10 inches annually, while the adjacent headwaters of the Basin receive as much as 200 inches of precipitation annually. River reaches are also variable with ravine channels found in mountainous areas and relatively wide floodplains found in the lower valleys.

The floodplain landscape found in and around the city is porous alluvium comprised of cobble rock, gravel and sand. The alluvium creates aquifers that store ground water. The alluvial aquifer comprises the City’s domestic water source. Protection of the quality and quantity of the City’s water source has been an ongoing emphasis for many years. These efforts are very diverse in context and range from the implementation of contemporary flood hazard mitigation standards, to protection of the aquifer recharge area through management of the VanTuyl Ranch and extension of sewer mains to adjacent unincorporated residential developments in the recharge area that otherwise would be serviced by individual sewage disposal systems.

The entire Upper Gunnison Basin has been designated by the Office of the State Engineer as “over appropriated,” meaning that development of new domestic water sources, such as individual wells, can only occur through an augmentation plan involving the acquisition of existing water rights to offset any consumption caused by the new development. The City possesses an excellent water rights portfolio, which can facilitate future development demands. This resource asset will play a critical role in the future to direct growth and development within the designated City water service area, which can help to minimize sprawl development outside the urban fringe.



State Water Plan. Based on existing trends, the State of Colorado has determined that the current statewide water trajectory is neither desirable nor sustainable. Governor Hickenlooper

has tasked the Colorado Water Conservation Board to take a hard look at Colorado's future water needs as a whole and plan for how they will be addressed. The Upper Gunnison Basin River Water Conservancy District and the Gunnison Basin Roundtable have been working on these issues for decades, and this new state-wide planning effort may have significant impacts on the Upper Gunnison Basin.

5.3 Gunnison Sage-grouse and Critical Habitat

Listing of the Gunnison Sage-grouse as an endangered species has been the focal community topic for the past two years, and regardless of the final decision, future land use and development decisions will be influenced by the bird's habitat needs. In fact, the [proposed listing decision document](#), published by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, has identified population growth and development as the most significant threat to the Gunnison Sage-grouse.

For the past 20 years, the Gunnison community has been proactive in managing and protecting Critical Habitat of the Gunnison Sage-grouse, and existing local land use policies and standards provide significant protections. Additionally, local state and federal land management agencies have implemented adaptive resource management strategies on the federal lands within the designated Critical Habitat within the Basin. These adaptive resource management actions have resulted in a local bird population that is stable and increasing.

5.4 Scenic Resources

People are attracted to the Gunnison area in part because of the mountains, rivers, and lakes that provide abundant opportunities for recreation. Blue Mesa Reservoir, just 10 minutes from town, is the largest body of water entirely in the State of Colorado. The shoreline is 20 miles long and is enjoyed by anglers, boaters, wind surfers, and ice skaters. Blue Mesa is part of the Aspinall-Storage Unit, which also includes Crystal and Morrow Point reservoirs. Taylor Reservoir is also a popular destination.

Gunnison is surrounded by mountain ranges and the West Elk, Raggeds, Maroon Bells, Fossil Ridge, Powderhorn, Uncompahgre, and LaGarita wilderness areas, and the Gunnison and Uncompahgre National Forests. These areas provide endless opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, jeeping, four-wheeling, and skiing.

5.5 Observations – Natural Resources

- The economic sectors of tourism and development economic sectors are directly linked to natural resource management because the unspoiled landscapes found in the valley are intrinsically captivating and appealing.
- The land ethic practiced by local ranchers has a profound contribution to the habitat resources found in the Basin.
- During the past 20 years the acquisition of conservation easements and/or public open space purchases has led to the protection of approximately 30,000 acres of private lands in the Upper Gunnison Basin.
- There are several other species of concern and habitat issues that will affect Gunnison's future. For example critical winter deer and elk habitats are found throughout the Gunnison Basin.

- Aquatic species and riparian habitat issues exists and are being addressed by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and local government efforts.
- The Environmental Protection Agency is implementing new water quality standards for nutrient and arsenic levels, which affects the operations of the City wastewater treatment facilities.
- The State Water Plan is of critical importance and local efforts by the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District will help to ensure that local opinions will help influence the outcome of the report.

SECTION 6: SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

6.1 Gunnison Valley Health

Gunnison Valley Health is the community-owned health system for Gunnison County. It offers health care ranging from the Gunnison Valley Hospital, Gunnison Valley Emergency Medical Service, the Family Birthing Center, Senior Care Center, Cancer Center and hospice and palliative care, home health and Gunnison Valley Health Foundation.

Hospital services are provided by Gunnison Valley Hospital, a 24-bed, short term, acute care hospital. The hospital is owned by Gunnison County and governed by a 7-member Board of Trustees. It is staffed by specialists, surgeons, physician assistants, nursing staff, technicians and technologists who work in conjunction with local family practice physicians. As a Level IV Trauma Center, local physicians staff the Emergency Room 24-hours per day, seven days a week. General surgery, orthopedic and OB/GYN consultants are available on an on-call basis.

In fall 2013, Gunnison Valley Hospital qualified as one of the Top 100 rural hospitals in the country for the second year in a row. As one of 1,331 hospitals in the US designated as a critical access facility and one of 29 in the State of Colorado, the hospital is a vital resource for the community.

Gunnison Valley Emergency Medical Service (EMS) has provided emergency ambulance care to the City and County since 1987. The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, medicines and training to provide emergency response 24 hours per day. The service also has the ability to respond in many different situations; the EMTs are trained to deliver care via horseback, snow cat, snow mobile or ATV. The EMS assumes medical responsibility for most situations in the county, including the medical component for the HazMat team and special events such as football games, Cattlemen's Days, and motorcycle and bicycle races.

Tri-State CareFlight offers flight-for-life helicopter service for transportation to larger medical centers when necessary.

Senior Care Center. The Senior Care Center has 59 licensed beds and provides clients aged 60 and over with skilled nursing care, a special care unit for Alzheimer's and Dementia, and hospice and palliative care.

6.2 Social Services

Gunnison County operates the Department of Health and Human Services, which includes Social Services, Public Health, and the Multicultural Resource Office. The Social Services department provides adult protective services; child care assistance; child support services; child and family services; the foster care program; and public assistance.

The Public Health Department provides services funded through grants and private donations. Some services have income qualifications and some require a fee. Services include immunizations; family planning; women's wellness; senior resources; multicultural services; access to health care; tobacco prevention; emergency preparedness; nurturing parenting program; childcare health consultation; the WIC (women, infants, and children) program; health care for children with special needs; disease surveillance; TB screening; and restaurant inspections.

The Multicultural Resource Office (MRO) is part of the Department of Health and Human Services and helps facilitate communication between non-English speaking people and medical service providers, the education system, legal services, and Human Services, as well as other businesses and services. Since 2001, the Health Navigator position has been funded by grants and it was recently reduced to part-time. In 2012 the MRO served 174 families, impacting 537 people, which included 272 children. The majority of the clients are women between 36 and 40 years old. The Multicultural Resource Office reported in March 2013 that it served fewer clients in 2012 than previous years. This is due to the economy causing some people to return to their native country, others moved away looking for employment and some agencies in Gunnison have hired Spanish-speaking personnel.

6.3 Observations – Social/Health Services

- Gunnison Valley Hospital is a vital resource for the community.
- The Multicultural Resource Office helps facilitate communication between non-English speaking people and medical service providers, the education system, legal services, and Human Services, as well as other businesses and services.
- Existing poverty levels for families with children under the age of five years are likely straining these related services, but to what degree has not yet been defined and discussed.

SECTION 7: EDUCATION

7.1 RE1J School District

The RE1J School District operates all of the public schools in Gunnison County, including Marble, Crested Butte and Gunnison. For purposes of this summary, data is for the schools in Gunnison only.

TABLE 3 GUNNISON SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS ¹			
School	Enrollment (Spring 2014)		Capacity
Lake School (Pre and K)	185		250
Gunnison Elementary School (1-5)	449	746	900
Gunnison Middle School (6-8)	297		
Gunnison High School (9-12)	326		525
Total in Gunnison	1,257		1,675

The Gunnison Community School opened in 1998 and houses grades 1-8. The new school consolidated the operations of six buildings into three buildings. In 2009 the School District began a renovation and 32,000 foot expansion of Gunnison High School and built the Valley School alternative high school. The projects were completed in 2011. Enrollment and building capacity numbers indicate that the facilities are adequate to serve the community and future

¹ Source for enrollment numbers: RE1J School District and <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

growth. Input from the School District regarding facility needs both in Gunnison and Crested Butte should be explored.

There are 86.5 FTE teachers in the Gunnison schools, with a student:faculty ratio of 13.5:1. The graduation rate at Gunnison High School is 79.75 percent with a 2.38 percent dropout rate. Of the 1,257 students enrolled in the Gunnison schools, 173 (13.7 percent) are ESL (English as a Second Language) students. About 400 (31.8 percent) of the students in Gunnison are bused to school.

7.2 ORSCH School

In 2009 ORSCH (One Room School House), a private K through 8 school, was created. It is a school that does not have the traditional age-based classes and allows students to learn at their own pace. ORSCH serves grades K-12 and had an enrollment of 67 students and eleven teachers in fall 2013¹. In the fall of 2014 ORSCH will be opening the doors of their new school at 200 N. Spruce, adjacent to the County Social Services offices.

7.3 Tenderfoot Child and Family Development Center

The Tenderfoot Child and Family Development Center is a non-profit early childhood education center located on the Western State Colorado University campus. The center opened in 2006 and was a collaborative project between the Western State College Foundation, the City of Gunnison, Gunnison County, the Buell Foundation, and private contributors. In 2013 there were 6 children in the Pre-Kindergarten class. Tenderfoot is also a daycare for infants and toddlers.

7.4 Western State Colorado University

Founded in 1901 as Colorado State Normal School, Western opened its doors in 1911 as a teacher's college. In 1923 it was renamed Western State College of Colorado offering undergraduate liberal arts and sciences degrees, as well as graduate teacher-education programs until the early 1980s when the graduate programs were discontinued by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. The graduate programs had a major economic influence on the city because of the number of graduate students and their families who came to Gunnison in the summers.

In 2003, Western was designated as a regional education provider for Chaffee, Gunnison, Hinsdale, and Lake Counties, and for parts of Saguache County. The university is an important educational, cultural, and economic development resource for the region. Western fulfills its responsibilities as a regional education provider through the academic curriculum, summer programming, extra- and co-curricular programming, public service, and research.

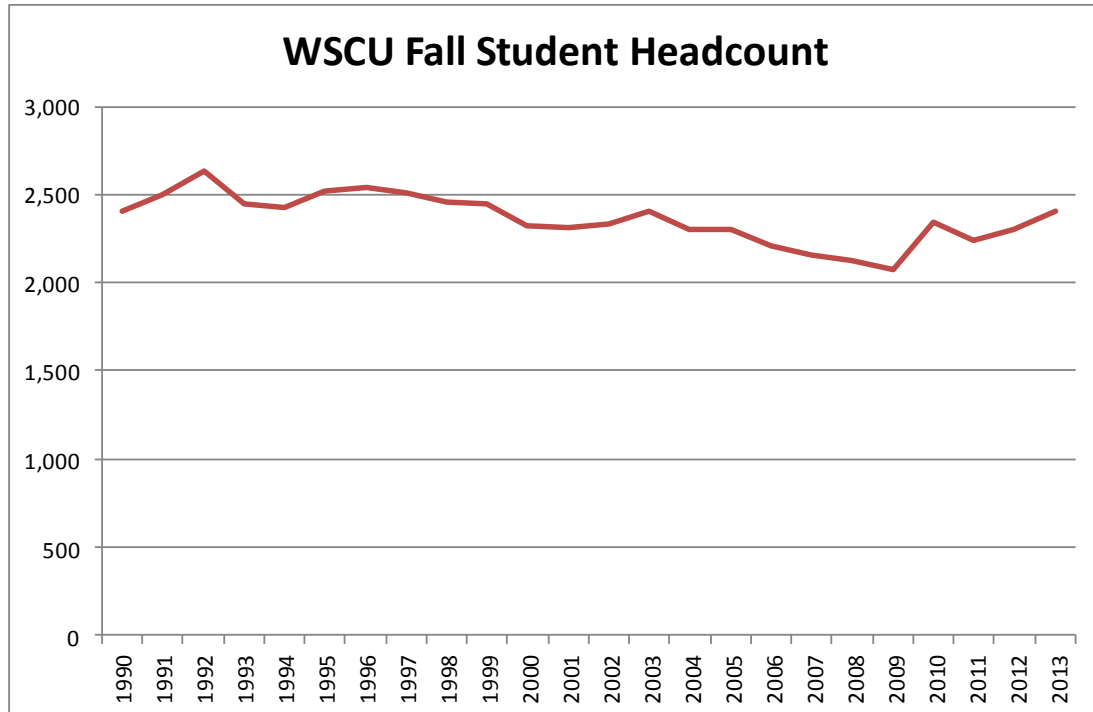
In 2012 the institution was renamed Western State Colorado University and expanded its programs to include graduate degrees, pre-professional studies and professional centers.

Obviously Western is a major economic driver for Gunnison. The 2013-14 budget from all sources (state appropriation, tuition, fees, grants, and private funding) is \$42,626,065. This includes \$17,453,370 in total compensation² for the 317 employees. In addition, the university budgeted \$1,107,805 for utilities, a large portion of which is paid to the City for water, sewer, and electricity.

¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

² This figure includes benefits.

Because of increased competition with in-state schools in the larger metropolitan areas, on-line education, and the cost of non-resident tuition, the university has struggled to grow its enrollment despite implementing numerous recruiting strategies over the years. The fall headcount enrollment has remained around 2,400 for the last 24 years, with a few fluctuations during that time. In fact, the fall 2013 headcount was three students fewer than the fall 1990 headcount.



To better serve students with more modern facilities and technology, and to address recruitment, the campus has been transformed over the last two decades with the construction of new student housing, new and remodeled academic buildings, and a new university center and field house. Since 2005, \$128 million has been invested into the university's physical plant. These construction projects have positively impacted the local economy. The project manager for the \$16 million Pinnacles apartment construction project stated that the project injected \$3.7 million into the local economy. Extrapolating from that figure, the local economy has been impacted by approximately \$29 million from the total \$128 million in construction projects.

7.5 Observations – Education

- Modern educational facilities in the community, both in the public schools and at WSCU, are a source of pride for the community and students.
- RE1J Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) test scores show that RE1J students' proficiency in reading, writing, math, and science are consistently above state-wide scores. Gunnison students' scores in reading have averaged 76% over the past three years and scores in writing, math and science are about 60%.
- Recurring state funding cuts to public education have resulted in significant operating shortfalls, and this past year was supplemented by an infusion of the district's reserve funds. The school district is likely to bring a local ballot initiative asking for a property tax increase to off-set the ongoing funding cuts by the state.

- There are opportunities for alternative education for grades K-12 at the ORSCH School, the Alternative High School program at Gunnison High School, and high school students may enroll in concurrent enrollment programs at Western State Colorado University. Community members may also enroll in Extended Studies courses at Western.

SECTION 8: COMMUNITY CULTURE

8.1 Gunnison Pioneer Museum

The Gunnison County Pioneer and Historical Society began in 1880 with early settlers of the valley. It was reorganized and incorporated in 1930. The society's goal of sponsoring a museum did not come to fruition until 1963 when the Adams and Wilson families donated land to be used for the Pioneer Museum and operation of the museum began in 1964. The Pioneer and Historical Society is run by a ten-person governing board and a curator. Approximately 60 volunteers work at the museum, which is open from May 24th to September 30th.

The museum features pioneer buildings and implements, an antique car museum, and railroad exhibits. The museum is funded through donations and summer ticket revenue (\$7 for adults, \$1 for children aged 6-12). Approximately 4,700 people from outside the community and 650 from the city and county visit the museum annually.

8.2 Gunnison Arts Center

The Gunnison Council for the Arts, an all-volunteer organization, was started in 1983 by a handful of individuals in the back room of a local restaurant. Most of these individuals had been active in Webster Players, a local theatre group, which could not find suitable performing venues. At the same time, the local dance instructor was outgrowing the space for her classes. In January 1984, the group was incorporated as the Gunnison Council for the Arts and a membership drive was held in 1986 during which 75 members were recruited. In May 1988, the Council leased one of the community's oldest buildings from First National Bank of Gunnison to house most of the council's activities, including an art gallery, a 72-seat theatre for drama and music, special exhibits and a variety of classes. The building was purchased in 1992 by the Council through the generous support of Gunnison citizens, private foundations and other philanthropists. Programming at the Gunnison Arts Center has grown to include year-round programming for children and adults.

8.3 Gunnison Valley Observatory

The Gunnison Valley Observatory is a public-owned facility that was begun through fund raising efforts to enhance the local economy through science tourism. The observatory is located south of Gunnison near the Hartman Rocks Recreational Area. The first public viewing began in June 2008. The observatory is open to the public on Friday and Saturday nights from mid-June to mid-September featuring public viewing on a 30-inch scope, a lecture on a variety of astronomy-related topics, viewing through a variety of smaller telescopes and occasional special events. During the 2013 season, 1,300 people visited the observatory.

8.4 Tenderfoot Archaeological Site

Tenderfoot Mountain (W Mountain) is immediately adjacent to the southeast boundary of the city. Archaeologists have determined that one of the oldest archaeological sites in North America is on top of Tenderfoot Mountain. Western State Colorado University has conducted field schools on the Tenderfoot Site since 1991 and each summer free tours are given to the general public and to groups.

8.5 Western State Colorado University

The university Art, Music, and Theatre departments offer art shows, conferences, guest speakers, summer camps, athletic events, concerts, and theatrical productions throughout the year, which are open to the public as well as Extended Studies courses which are available for members of the community.

8.6 Observations – Community Culture

- The Gunnison Pioneer Museum contributes to tourism as well as preserving relics of the community's agricultural and pioneer heritage.
- The Gunnison Arts Center contributes to the cultural life of the community and provides a venue for local artists and thespians.
- The Gunnison Valley Observatory is an educational resource utilizing local scholars to provide "hands on" educational opportunities not available elsewhere in the Valley.
- The Tenderfoot Archaeological Site is a significant cultural resource that has helped scientists determine the origins of human habitation of the Gunnison Valley.
- Western State Colorado University is a significant educational institution attracting students from all over the United States and is a primary economic driver of the community.
- Other opportunities to become engaged in the community include art walks, concerts in the park, the Farmer's Market and entertainment at local eating and drinking establishments.

SECTION 9: TRANSPORTATION

9.1 Regional Highway System

The downtown Central Business District is bisected by Tomichi Avenue (Highway 50) and Main Street (Highway 135). This is the busiest intersection in the city and the main route for many large construction and delivery trucks. Presently, the peak daily traffic volume¹ is about 12,000 trips per day. The pavement width of Main Street is 70 feet and Tomichi Avenue is 96 feet in width. Both streets have four lanes of traffic with turning lanes



¹ Average Daily Traffic Volume (ADT) is the total 24-hour volume of vehicular traffic at a particular location measured in vehicles per day.

and parallel parking. Side streets are an average 70 feet pavement width with diagonal parking. Most of the downtown area has a two-hour parking time restriction between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Along Main Street on the north 100-300 blocks, there are 72 parallel parking spaces. The side streets one block to the east and west within those blocks contain 146 diagonal parking spaces. The entire Central Business District has a total of approximately 610 parallel and diagonal parking spaces.

The City's *Master Plan* policy for transportation regarding downtown states "Realizing that downtown is the vital core for Gunnison's civic life, create a transportation environment that is both inviting and safe." Additional policy items include:

- special event parking sites serviced by public transit
- evaluate and relocate objects (control boxes, signs, furniture, etc.) that constrain pedestrian movement;
- construct pedestrian devices to shorten crossing distances on Main Street and Tomichi Avenue (curb extension or islands);
- evaluate traffic-calming devices to provide additional safety for pedestrians;
- complete a parking utilization study; and,
- create a bypass around Gunnison between Highway 50 and Highway 135.

The status of some of these issues is addressed under the Parking and City Transportation System sections below.

The *City of Gunnison Master Plan* also contemplates the extension of Georgia Avenue. Additionally, during the Gunnison Rising Annexation an agreement between Western State Colorado University and the City addressed future improvements to Georgia Avenue as the pedestrian gateway to- and from- downtown and the university campus. The agreement includes a pronounced university entrance with widened sidewalks and other streetscape amenities to tie the campus to the city.

Pedestrian safety has always been of primary importance to the City. Pedestrian crossing signs and painted crosswalks help manage the interaction of pedestrians and automobiles. Crossing Main Street safely is a function of law abidance. The width of Tomichi Avenue makes it difficult for pedestrian crossings. Discussions have ensued regarding bulb-outs or pedestrian islands to increase pedestrian safety. These devices are problematic with Gunnison's climate and the need to plow snow during the winter months and the accommodation of seasonal stormwater flows.

9.2 Parking

Parking has long been considered an issue in the downtown area. Whether the potential parking issue is perceived or real has never been determined. Parking can be an issue for vehicles towing trailers or RV's. The City has obtained permission to use the 400 block of West Virginia Avenue (the old City Market site) as a parking option for these large vehicles.

Highway traffic analysis conducted during the past seven years indicate that the existing traffic functions on Highways 135 and 50 are adequately accommodated by these highway corridors. The highway system capacity is a function of vehicle trips occurring during peak hours – generally morning and evening commutes. The stoplight on Tomichi Avenue (Highway 50) and Main Street (Highway 135) is the busiest intersection in the city. Intersection function or the lack thereof, can cause traffic delays and, in the worst case, lead to gridlock situations. Presently, the Tomichi and Main Street intersection functions adequately, even during the highest volume times occurring during the summer months. However, traffic studies have shown that in the future

traffic volumes are anticipated to increase and the highway corridor and intersection functions will become less efficient.

In 2013 the City initiated the *Highway 50 Access Control Plan* which was a requirement of the Gunnison Rising PUD and annexation. Development of this plan was jointly coordinated by the Colorado Department of Transportation, Gunnison Valley Partners, Gunnison County, and the City. It entailed the development of a plan addressing the Highway 50 corridor from the Tomichi and Main Street intersection to the Signal Peak Industrial Park, located approximately three miles to the east of the Pioneer Museum site. The plan identifies the basic highway design needs in terms of future lane configurations and intersection location and function that must be considered in relation to future traffic volumes. The resulting plan provides a basic blueprint to help ensure that future traffic volumes in this corridor can be efficiently accommodated by the road system.

9.3 City Transportation System

The city's street system is configured in an efficient grid pattern and there are approximately forty miles of streets existing today. City streets are categorized as arterial, collector, local, and sub-local streets.

Traffic patterns and volumes are a function of land use and development patterns found within the city. The *Gunnison Rising Transportation Master Plan* proposes that Georgia and College Avenues will eventually be extended into Gunnison Rising and these streets will help diffuse traffic volumes and reduce traffic demand on Highway 50. The *Gunnison Rising Annexation Agreement* requires that Georgia Avenue will be developed under a corridor plan funded by a real estate transfer fee applied to land sales in the Gunnison Rising development.

In 2012 City staff surveyed students at Western to determine their travel behavior and preferred routes between the campus and the greater community. The survey showed that students primarily walk, bike, drive, or skateboard to North Main Street via Colorado Street or Denver Avenue and that their main destination is City Market.

When Western completed construction of the Pinnacles apartment complex the traffic pattern shifted from Georgia Avenue to Ohio Avenue and neighbors on Colorado Street north of Ohio Avenue have anecdotally reported that traffic has decreased in their neighborhood because students access the campus via Ohio Avenue. It is also likely that the extension of Denver Avenue into the new field house parking lot has changed traffic patterns as well. A focal key to movement between the campus and the Greater community is to provide multiple choices for both motorized and non-motorized commuters.

Given the land use assumptions in the *West Gunnison Neighborhood Plan*, the West Gunnison Neighborhood is projected to add 10,000 trips per day by the year 2035. The plan includes recommendations for street extensions and a proposed roadway system configured in a grid pattern as well as traffic calming devices.

Although there has been interest in the past to develop a bypass connecting US 50 to SH 135 in the northeast quadrant of the city, this is probably unfeasible due to geological constraints and land ownership issues.

9.4 Non-Motorized Transportation

In April 2013, the City adopted the *Non-Motorized Transportation Plan* which contains recommendations for bikeways, pedestrian routes, and multi-use trails to make the transportation network of the city safer and more accessible for all users.

Sidewalks. In many instances historic development in the city precluded the development of continuous sidewalks in the developed neighborhoods. This makes improvements challenging because of varying right-of-way widths and private use of the rights-of-way where sidewalks do not exist.

Bike Lanes. In May 2012 the League of American Bicyclists designated Gunnison as a Bicycle Friendly Community. This is due in part to the development of bike lanes on designated streets in the city. The existing 8.5 mile bike lane network serves every neighborhood in the city. Additionally, approximately 18 miles of hard-surfaced multi-use trails are developed in and around the city to accommodate non-motorized travel.



Multi-Use Trail System. Since it was adopted in 2008, many recommendations from the *Trails Master Plan* have been implemented. These trail segments and bikeways have provided access to recreational amenities for residents of the city, as well as a safe route to the schools and the city core for residents of outlying neighborhoods. These segments include the Twin Bridges; Whitewater Park; West Gunnison Neighborhood; Railroad Grade; VanTuyl Ranch; County Road 13; and North Bridge multi-use trails. These facilities have been funded by the one percent recreation tax approved by city voters in 2008. Under the ballot initiative, the City is obligated to spend \$1 million on the development of trails – this ballot obligation will be fulfilled by the end of 2014.

Non-Motorized System Capital Planning. The *Non-Motorized Transportation Plan* contains a fifteen-year prioritization and implementation plan for improvements of non-motorized transportation facilities. Funding of these facility improvements will be based upon capital planning prioritization for recreation facilities including trail extensions, park improvements and improvements to the community center, ice rink and other park facilities.

9.5 Complete Streets

The *Comprehensive Plan* will place specific emphasis upon development of “Complete Streets” along the highway corridors of the city. The concept of Complete Streets embodies the development of street corridors to serve all transportation modes with equal emphasis placed upon non-motorized and vehicular facility needs. The Complete Streets concept should also consider other functions such as utilities and landscape design to ensure safe, more accessible and efficient transportation routes for everyone.

9.6 Land Based and Air Transit

Gunnison Valley Regional Transportation Authority. The mission of the Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority (RTA) is to provide and improve air transportation to, and from, the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport on a year-round basis, and to develop a long-term and energy efficient public ground transportation system within Gunnison County. The district boundaries include all of Gunnison County except Marble, Pitkin, Ohio City, and Somerset.

The RTA operates as a special district, with revenues generated by a sales tax. The RTA tax is not collected on grocery or energy purchases. The sales tax levy is allocated at 3.5 cents on a \$10.00 sale in the city of Gunnison and 6 cents on a \$10.00 sale in the rest of the district. Depending upon the retail economic activity in the district, this generates anywhere between \$900,000 and \$1.2 million annually. The RTA also applies for, and receives, grants for buses and bus operations. The RTA receives federal dollars each year from CDOT to help with the operation of the buses. The four buses were purchased in 2007 with a \$980,000 grant from the State of Colorado. This grant was the first state grant ever given for transit and the RTA was one of a handful of agencies to be awarded the grant. The RTA also receives grants from the federal government which can only be used to fund capital projects.

Gunnison Crested Butte Regional Airport. The Gunnison Crested Butte Regional Airport is a County-owned public airport serving the Gunnison Valley and Crested Butte. It is in the *National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems* and is designated as a primary commercial service airport, meaning that it has more than 10,000 enplanements per year. The airport had 36,035 enplanements in 2008; 42,130 in 2009; and 37,316 in 2010. Seasonal (winter) flights are offered by American Airlines to Dallas/Fort Worth, United Airlines to Houston-Intercontinental, United Express to Chicago O'Hare, and year-round flights to Denver are provided by United Express. The airport also serves general aviation and military aircraft.

During the next year, Gunnison County will embark on an update of the Airport Master Plan. The coincidental timing of this new airport plan and the City's plan update are seen to be advantageous. Common coordination between the two projects has been discussed by County and City staff members.

Ground Transportation. In addition to rental cars, transportation within the Gunnison Valley is provided by the Alpine Express Shuttle (from the airport to Crested Butte); Crested Butte Specialty Services, Dolly's Mountain Shuttle, and the Mountain Express provide transportation between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte; the RTA bus provides free bus service in Gunnison and between Gunnison and Crested Butte. The 2008 *Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan* contains recommendations for a transportation system in the Gunnison Valley. In the plan, the issue of a Gunnison Transit Circulator was examined. This would be a bus route that circulates in the city of Gunnison only, which would run every 10-20 minutes and connect at least three unique destinations. It was determined that Gunnison does not have enough population density to support a circulator transit system.

The plan does contain a recommendation that the City or the Gunnison Valley Regional Transportation Authority should explore the provision of social service transportation for people who cannot use the traditional transit service.

9.7 Observations – Transportation

- Presently, the intersection and Tomichi and Main Street functions adequately, even during the highest volume times occurring during the summer months. However, in the future traffic volumes are anticipated to increase and the highway corridor and intersection functions will become less efficient.
- Gunnison has very wide streets, and to some extent this has become part of the city's identity, yet street width influences vehicular speed and pedestrian crossing safety. Is the community willing to explore alternative roadway cross-sections that narrow the streets while ensuring that multi-modal mobility is addressed?

- The *Highway 50 Access Control Plan* identifies the basic highway design needs, in terms of future lane configurations and intersection location and function that must be considered in relation to future traffic volumes. The resulting plan provides a basic blueprint to help ensure that future traffic volumes in this corridor are efficiently accommodated by the road system. In addition to Gunnison Rising, other land use increases in and around the community will add to this issue. How important are “traffic growth” and “increased congestion” when considering the future of Gunnison?
- There have been historic conversations about a “bypass” between US 50 (East Tomichi) and State Highway 135 (North Main Street) in the northeast quadrant of the City, although implementation would be extremely difficult and expensive. How important is this “state highway bypass” idea as future land use issues are being considered?
- The *Comprehensive Plan* will place specific emphasis upon development of “Complete Streets” along the city highway corridors. What does “Complete Streets” mean to the community and how will it be implemented?
- Improvements to increase pedestrian crossings often involve curb extensions (bulbouts) and refuge islands (medians) in the roadway to shorten the exposure to vehicular traffic. Unfortunately these improvements complicate snow removal efforts. How important are these pedestrian crossing improvements when they will be resisted by Public Works staff?
- Opportunities to extend the city’s street grid system, and maintain or improve street system connectivity should be explored as infill and new development occurs.
- The City has adopted plans for non-motorized transportation but obligations to spend \$1 million from the recreation tax initiative will have been met in 2014 and not all of the trail segments have been completed. Funding for trails will be based upon capital planning budget prioritization or grants.
- It is logical to assume that the Gunnison Regional Transportation Authority tasks will increase in the future. Trends indicate that airlines continue to push for increased seat guarantees and the bus service ridership between Gunnison and Mt. Crested Butte is also increasing.
- The Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport is an important variable in the local economy. However the airport facilities limit utility and street extension and their operations are not compatible with many municipal land uses. Development of a new airport master plan is slated to begin later this summer. The concurrency of the City *Comprehensive Plan* and the Airport master planning processes provides an excellent opportunity to address existing conflicts.

SECTION 10: LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The City organizational structure is comprised of six primary departments: Clerk, Finance, Police, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Community Development. As required by the *City Charter*, the operations are conducted under a Council/Manager structure whereby the five-member elected Council is tasked with setting policy and approving annual budgets and

expenditures. The City Manager is responsible for the management of all employees and oversight of the City departments.

10.1 Public Works

Public Works is the largest department in the City. Responsibilities are directed at the continued operations and maintenance of streets, trails, water, wastewater collection and treatment, stormwater, irrigation ditch system, refuse, fleet service, and electrical systems. The departments of Electric, Water, Wastewater and Refuse are defined as Enterprise Funds, meaning their operations are funding through service fee collections.

Water Department. The Water Department is responsible for the City's potable and raw water services. The potable water system is comprised of the distribution facilities, water storage tanks which account for fire flow protection needs, and nine wells drawing groundwater from the underlying alluvial aquifer system.

The *Gunnison Water Distribution System Master Plan* (2007) provides the City with a comprehensive framework to address short and long-term needs for the finished water distribution system. Other major areas evaluated include well production capacity, transmission and distribution capacity, and storage requirements. These evaluations help in the direction and preparation of project implementation plans, design, construction, and financing of facilities to meet the city's anticipated water demands as a result of population growth and commercial development.

In 2007 the maximum daily demand was equal to about 82 percent of well capacity. Additional well capacity will be needed to support future growth. The majority of the "infill" developments are located on the west side of the city. Limited distribution system transmission capacity from the storage reservoirs makes it difficult to provide adequate fire protection in new developments on the west side of town and it is contemplated that a new well in West Gunnison will meet fire-flow demands.

Gunnison is one of only two cities in the State of Colorado that has a ditch irrigation system. Decreed water rights for the ditch system and town pipeline date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s and these water rights are one of the city's most valuable resources. The open ditches flowing through town and the green lawns and parks in the city contribute to the summer appeal of the community.

Wastewater Department. Facilities managed by the Wastewater Department include the wastewater collection system and the wastewater treatment plant. The collection system consists of buried pipes of varying sizes that gravity-flow wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant located approximately three miles west of the city. The wastewater treatment plant, built in 1980, operates under permits issued by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. In addition to serving development in the city boundary, subdivision developments in the vicinity of the city are also served by the wastewater treatment plant. This regional service provision is critical to ensure that the underlying domestic water aquifer source is not contaminated by the proliferation of individual sewage disposal systems (leach fields) that tend to fail over time.

The *City of Gunnison Wastewater Master Plan* (2006) provides the City with a comprehensive framework to address short and long-term needs for the wastewater collection system. The plan used future development trends to model the system and identify needs for maintaining the system's future integrity. The plan found that infiltration of groundwater that enters the collection system through pipe cracks and other defects taxes the service capacity of the wastewater

treatment plant. Since 2006 the City has funded a repair program of the collection system that incorporates a “slip-line” into existing collection pipes, which has significantly reduced groundwater infiltration.

Electric Department. The Gunnison Electric Service Territory comprises 11.8 square miles. Power is supplied to the City from a combination of sources. Approximately ## percent of the city’s power supply is from the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) who markets and delivers hydroelectric power services within a 15-state region of the central and western U.S. The other major power supplier is the Municipal Electric Agency of Nebraska (MEAN). MEAN provides power supply, transmission and related services to more than 65 communities, one public power district and one joint-action agency in four states: Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming. Approximately ## percent of the city’s electric purchase portfolio is from renewable energy sources.

City electric facilities include two substations and an extensive distribution system. The system is designed for redundancy so that if service is impeded at one juncture of the system, alternative electric service can be provided from another power feed source, helping to minimize disruptions. The fixed asset value of the system is approximately \$2.5 million. The 4,406 customers (meters) have the fourth lowest electric fee rates in the state.

Streets Department. The Streets Department provides a variety of services necessary to maintain safe streets. Snow removal operations predominate the winter months and summer work entails improvement projects to maintain the system. Street maintenance is a priority with funding dedicated to crack sealing and slurry sealing operations in order to maximize the life of asphalt. Annual funds for asphalt replacement has increased in the past several years to help keep up with aging street surfaces. During the past five years the annual budgets and appropriations for street maintenance and improvements have averaged \$650,000 per year.

10.2 Parks and Recreation

City Recreation Facilities and Operations. The City of Gunnison Parks and Recreation Department operates youth and adult recreation programs. In 2012, 3,938 people participated in 105 programs and in 2013 there were 3,436 participants. The department is responsible for maintaining seven parks comprising 38 acres, as well as the Community Center, Ice Rink, Cranor Hill Ski Area, Gunnison Mountain Park and the Hartman Rocks base area facilities.

The Community Center opened in 2007 and the pool addition was completed in 2009. In addition to the organized events, the Community Center is heavily used by members of the community. In 2013 there were 71,974 patron visits to the facility. This includes people using membership cards, drop-ins, people involved in programs and the Young at Heart group.

The Jorgenson Park Complex includes fields for soccer and football, four softball fields, baseball fields, a skate park, PacMan Pond, BMX track and the indoor and outdoor ice rinks. The indoor ice rink was constructed in 2008 and was also part of the recreation tax obligation. In 2012 a new skate park was constructed at Jorgenson Park and the baseball field was revamped with new fencing, dugouts and backstop.

Recreation Collaboration. Gunnison is an active community and recreation is, in many cases, supported through collaborative efforts. For example, the Gunnison Valley Hockey Association (GVHA) offers youth and adult hockey programs and the Association rents the Jorgensen Ice Complex for their programs. Other examples include Gunnison Nordic which grooms Nordic

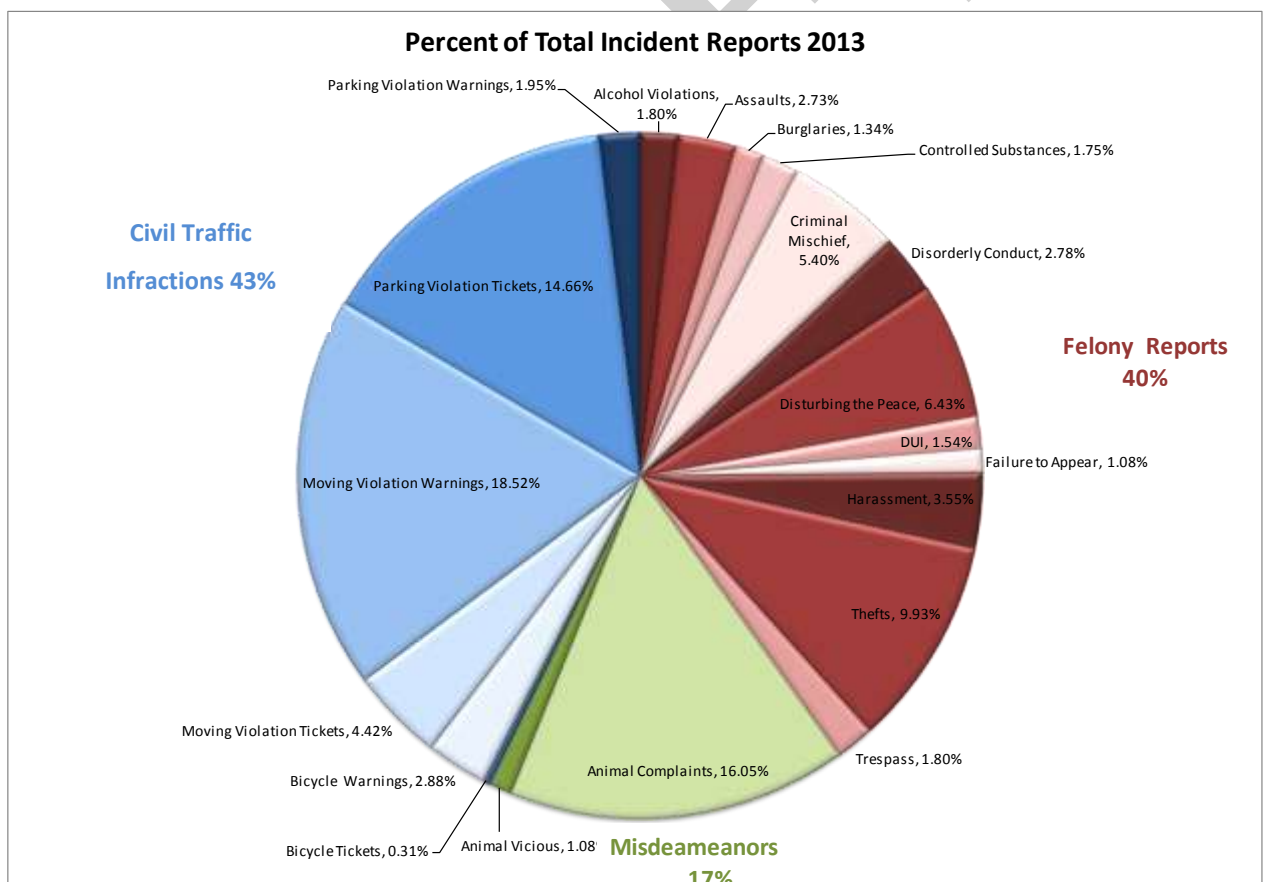
tracts in a variety of areas including the VanTuyl Ranch, Hartman Rocks and various urban park facilities. Gunnison Trails is another important partner collaborating with the City on trail system development and other recreation endeavors.

Park and Recreation Master Plan Update. In June 2014 the city received a \$50,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado for the update of the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. It is anticipated that the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will focus on a variety of topics, including facility capacities, program demands, staffing and funding. The simultaneous update of the *Comprehensive Plan* provides opportunity for sharing ideas for both planning efforts.

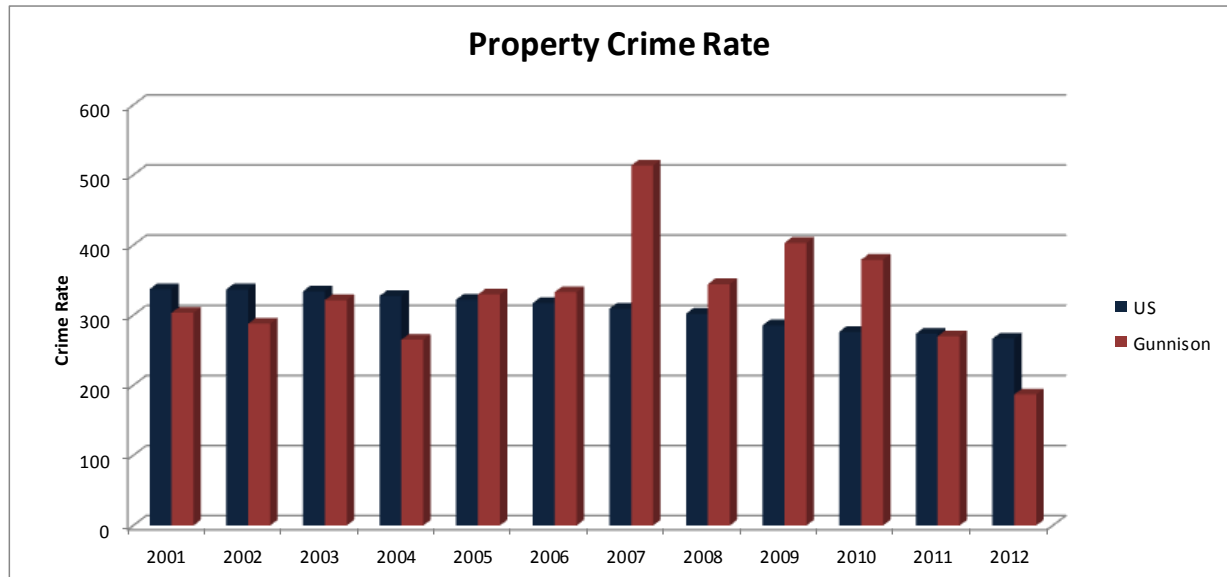
10.3 Police and E911

The Police department is responsible for public safety functions including the operation of the E911 system for Gunnison and Hinsdale counties. The department now operates out the new facilities completed in 2014. The department consists of 14 sworn officers, two administrative employees and ten Emergency Services employees.

The Gunnison Police Department reported 1,944 incidents in 2013. Of those, 40 percent were felonies, 43 percent were traffic infractions and 17 percent were misdemeanor animal offences. The pie-chart displays statistics for the 2013 Incident Reports.



Overall, Gunnison's crime rate is lower than national averages and falls in the "average" range (200-449)¹. Because the population is small, a one-person crime spree can have a large influence on statistics for any given year; as can be seen in the chart below, the number of burglaries and thefts increased significantly in 2007.



10.4 Administrative Departments

While every City department has administrative staff services, the general administration functions are provided by the Finance, Clerk and Community Development departments. The Finance department is responsible for budget preparation coordination, accounting, audits, utility service billing, and human resources. The Clerk department is responsible for records retention, council administration, and city court. The Community Development Department manages planning, building, and fire-safety services.

10.5 Observations – City Services

- During the national recession, various departments in the City lost employees through attrition. Additionally, employee wages were frozen for three years. While public safety and customer services were adequately maintained, productivity in certain departments was reduced. In the past year revenues have been increasing and the 2014 revenues are projected to continue in an upward trend. Some positions previously vacated through attrition are projected to be filled.
- Maintaining a quality workforce is supported by the City Council.
- Recently promulgated water quality standards for nutrients and arsenic have been implemented, which may require additional modifications to the wastewater treatment facility.
- Limitations on population growth are based on minimum fire-flows in West Gunnison and the number of water wells.

¹ Crime rate is calculated by dividing the population by the number of crimes and multiplying by 100,000.

- The potential listing of the Gunnison Sage-grouse could have a significant impact upon several City service operations; in particular the electrical services and wastewater treatment plant operations. These changes would involve planning by required “consultations” and/or “Take Permits” that apply to projects considered to have a Federal Nexus.
- Parks and Recreation activities continue to grow and facility use needs are also increasing. The Parks and Recreation department is working with the Boomer’s Senior Citizen organization to obtain funding for an addition to the Community Center to facilitate increasing needs.
- Maintenance of the City’s trail system facilities and non-motorized transportation needs continues to increase. These service demands will continue and funding projections will increase through time.
- Growth and development in the city has been slow and steady. However, County growth management policies have attempted to focus development within and adjacent to the municipal limits. Residents in the unincorporated area around the city rely upon many municipal services including electric service, wastewater treatment and recreation.
- Major improvements implemented by the City are funded through a five year Capital Improvement Plan process. Additional focus has been placed upon capital planning to maintain funding reserves at an appropriate level. However, certain fund reserves must be kept at relatively high level because some facilities, such as electrical substations and the pool have extremely expensive equipment and adequate reserves must be maintained in the event of equipment failure.

SECTION 11: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

To be developed